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THE TREASURE REVEALER OF BHUTAN

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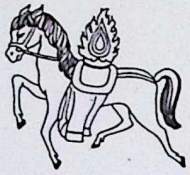

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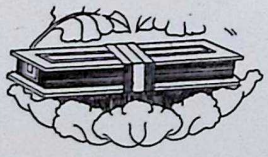

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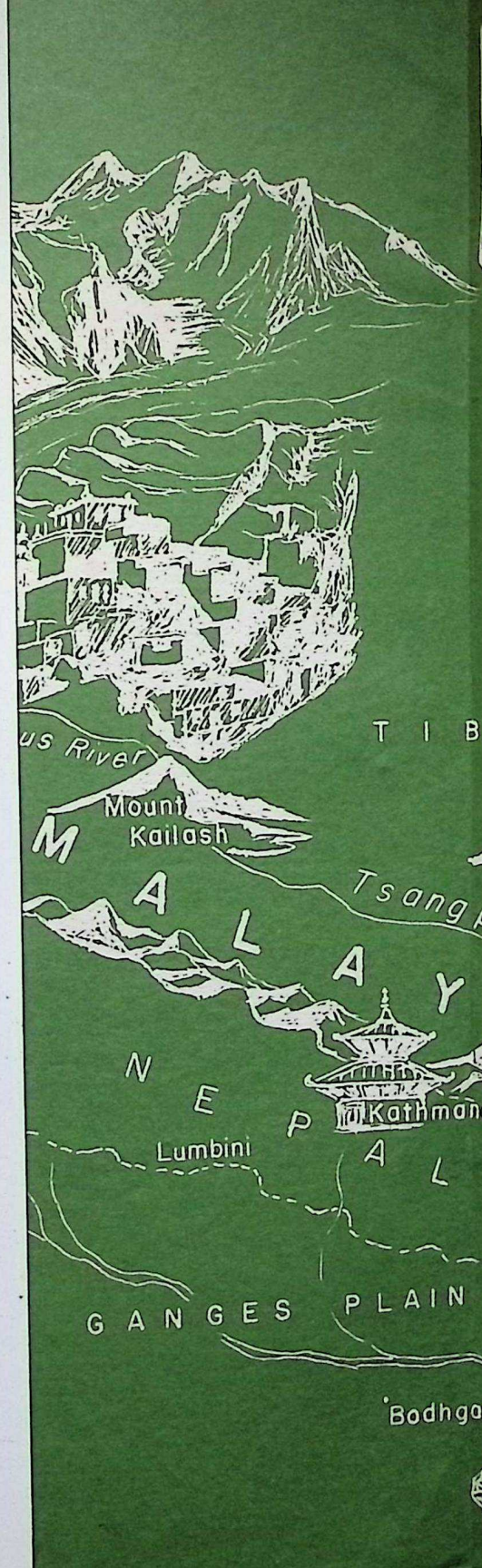

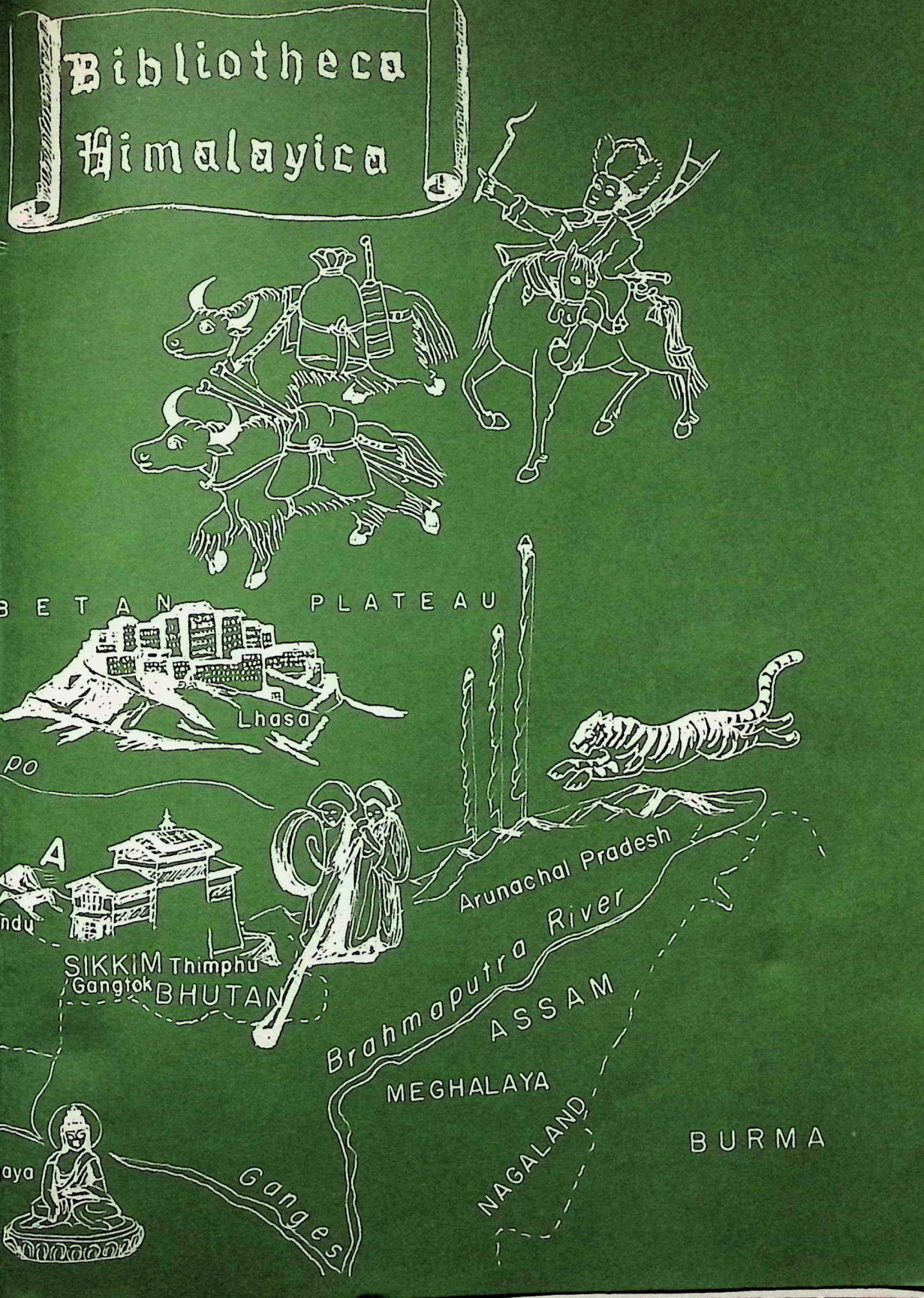
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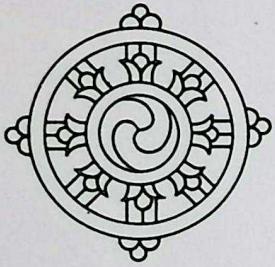

Edited by

H. K. KULÖY

THE TREASURE REVEALER OF BHUTAN

Pemalingpa, the Terma Tradition and its Critics

Padma Tshewang
Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi
Chris Butters
Sigmund K. Sætreng

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PREFACE

The text and the illustrations in this book take the reader to the Bumthang region, the spiritual heartland of Bhutan, with its legacy of miracles and sages throughout many centuries.

The esoteric doctrine of hidden spiritual treasures and texts, the Terma, is one of the least known yet most fascinating aspects of Himalayan Buddhism, where it is particularly important within the Nyingma or 'Old School'. The subject of both scepticism and some misinterpretation, it has attracted growing attention in recent years.

Created and concealed by the Tantric master Guru Padmasambhava over a thousand years ago, these spiritual treasures have since then been revealed at predestined times, in circumstances shrouded in prophecy and mystery. It is a living tradition, for new Termas continue to be revealed up to our own times.

This study of the life and works of Bhutan's great saint Pemalingpa (1450-1521), prophesied as one of the five great Treasure Revealers, illustrates the meaning of such figures within the context of their own cultures. The book also serves to highlight some contemporary questions about our understanding and interpretation of Himalayan Buddhist cultures.

This book grew slowly from talks held in Bhutan, and is built around the biography of Terton Pemalingpa which was under preparation by Padma Tshewang. It has been composed in the following way: Padma Tshewang's text, in Tibetan (Choké) was first roughly translated by and discussed with Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, and then translated into the present English text by Chris Butters. Cross-checking and lengthy clarifications both of textual details and of doctrinal points, took place throughout the process between all four authors involved. Advice was sought on various points from other learned people in Bhutan. The additional chapters were then discussed and written, including translations of the excerpts from Pemalingpa's *Collected Works.* General editing of the book was done by Chris Butters, at the National Library in Thimphu. Photographs were taken during visits to the Bumthang region between 1991 and 1993.

It was decided that for non-Bhutanese readers it would be preferable to reorder Padma Tshewang's text substantially, and to include subtitles, as well as additional local factual information not included in the Choké text. In addition, since earlier research has already shed much light on the chronological complexities of Pemalingpa's life, we felt it would be neither useful, nor indeed our main aim, to cover that ground again. The present biography is, therefore, now structured in a thematic way rather than according to a strictly chronological pattern.

As regards the translation of Padma Tshewang's biography, it is commonly accepted that useful rendering of such texts demands a rather open approach. In some instances, concepts need to be explored and expanded; in others, one needs to render expressions or images in more accessible ways. Michael Broido, referring in particular to the linguistic philosopher P.F.Strawson, sums up this issue as follows: "Our view of 'making clear' will be influenced by the notion of discourse in general. Philosophers

have framed such notions in two rather different ways: in terms of formal semantics and in terms of communication-intention..." [1]. Our principal intention being to illustrate the cultural significance of the Treasure Revealer, rather than historical details, it was natural to choose the abovementioned 'open' mode of translation for this text.

We easily take for granted that in our own idiom, we are used to extensive sets of verbal conventions and short-cuts. Directly translated, such items create a barrier to communication. To take one example: in Choké literature one comes again and again across stock phrases such as "for the sake of all sentient beings..." For the Buddhist readers, such repetition is devotional in itself, and as natural as daily recitation of mantras; their minds will appreciate their intent, but also move effortlessly on to the next sentence. In a foreign language, on the contrary, these phrases are perceived rather as an irritation or even as poor style. In English, for example, it is seen as a quality to vary, not repeat, one's expression.

Whilst many such repetitions have been omitted here, it is worth bearing in mind that within the Buddhist perspective they have their function. For people of the scientific-rational disposition, the intellectual process is of great importance when one is reading. For the Buddhist however the intellectual function, whilst very important, can not and should not be separated from the religious dimension. Religious practice is even more essential than the Word; yet also, the Word is part of the Practice. So a text must be read and assimilated, not only by the head but by one's whole being. Then devotional passages and interludes are not a distraction from the actual matter of the text, but on the contrary a right and necessary part of it - without which true understanding can not result.

Buddhist scholars have for centuries demonstrated philosophical analysis as sophisticated and diverse as that of the West - as T.R.V.Murti shows in his book on the Madhyamika system of thought,[2] and authors such as D.T.Suzuki, Francis Cook or Steve Odin. Alexander Piatigorsky should be added, whose book *The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought* is particularly lucid on the Western tendency to psychologise Buddhist concepts[3]. Buddhism however deliberately seeks to go beyond the intellect, and this is of course clear-minded and anything but an expression of uncritical religiosity. In the words of C.G.Jung: "In the West we have just begun to understand that (Mind) is the essential condition of cognition, and hence of the cognitive existence of the world. There is no conflict between religion and science in the East, because no science there is based upon the passion for facts, and no religion upon mere faith" - adding, in another essay: "for knowledge alone, like faith alone, is always insufficient" [4].

The last part of this book provides commentaries from various angles on the issues at hand. These concern both the basic outlook which conditions one's interpretations of Buddhism, and a section dedicated to a brief survey of Pemalingpa's works. In addition,

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1 Broido, "The Term *dngos-po'i ganas-lugs...*" in: Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi, *Tibetan studies*, p. 60.

2 Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism.*

3 See bibliography for Piatigorsky and the other authors noted here.

4 Jung, "Psychological Commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation", in: *Collected Works Vol. 11* p. 480, and then in: "Yoga and the West", *idem* p. 532.

the study of Pemalingpa published in 1989 by Michael Aris comes under particular scrutiny. Although we disagree with its approach as well as its conclusions, acknowledgement should be expressed here for the stimulation and controversy it provided.

Sources and references regarding Pemalingpa have been checked locally, but only verified in a cursory way against the mass of specialised historical and other sources; such a task having been both beyond our skills, and outside the scope of this book. Nor does the translation attempt to be authoritative in its rendering of Buddhist terminology, though long discussions were held on many points. When it comes to interpretation of such a different way of thinking, standardisation is not always an asset. As professional photographers know, the best way to illuminate a subject is often to cast various rays of light on it from different angles. Thus our choice of English phrases for concepts is often contextual, and in places deliberately a bit different from standard terminology. Above all, however, it may be stressed that this book is not principally a dissertation on philosophical points, nor a work of historical research in relation to Pemalingpa's life and contemporaries; but an attempt both at stimulating debate, and at seeing and understanding the subject of Terma as a whole and from the Buddhist point of view.

Finally, it should be said that we have aimed to keep this book fairly readable in form. Spellings are therefore simplified; Tibetan transliteration is given in the alphabetical index. We have also been fortunate in being able to include a series of illustrations, which it is hoped will bring to life the context and feeling of our subject.

Our gratitude should be expressed particularly to Tibetologists Per Kværne and Toni Huber for their invaluable encouragement, suggestions and comments, though they should bear no blame for the many weaknesses remaining in our book. Sigmund Kvaløy Saetreng wishes also to express thanks to the Norwegian Research Council, for funding related partly to this work.

The theme of Terma is complex and also controversial by nature; and the life of the great Bhutanese saint Pemalingpa is a fascinating subject. We hope that the book will be of interest both to scholars and to a wider readership; a small contribution to reflection on and deeper understanding of a fascinating topic.

Homage to the Guru, to all that is within and beyond words.

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INTRODUCTION

by CHRIS BUTTERS

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For many centuries the Terma or Hidden Treasures have played a central part in most of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and in particular within the Nyingma school.

This book is about the fifteenth-century saint and treasure-revealer, Ugyen Pemalingpa (1450-1521). He was one of the most important religious figures to emerge from the Himalayan region of Bhutan, and his legacy spread far and wide throughout the Tibetan world. More generally, this book discusses the little-known doctrine of the Terma; it also proposes some questions about the nature and scope of Tibetological studies on topics such as that of Terma, and brings in some broader issues of contemporary relevance.

Within many cultures can be found a tradition of scriptures and other materials said to be of divine origin, which are claimed to have appeared or been discovered by revelation. The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of revealed treasures, Termas, and their finders, the Tertons, is nevertheless extraordinary in many respects. Firstly, because of the secret nature of these treasures and their origin. Secondly, because the Termas are circumscribed by an exceptionally complex and sophisticated set of doctrines. And thirdly, because the tradition lives into our own times, with continuing revelations of new Termas.

Bhutan's revered Treasure Revealer, Pemalingpa, is recognised as being the fourth of five 'Sovereign' Tertons whose appearance and discoveries had been prophesied. The first Sovereign Terton appeared in the twelfth century, whilst the fifth and last lived just over 100 years ago. In addition, according to the tradition there are about 100 'Major' Tertons and 1000 'Minor' Tertons[5]. Some of these are alive and active today, and many more are to appear in future; though we should remember that in the Buddhist world view, we are living in a declining age where great spiritual figures appear less and less

---

5 The Five Sovereign Tertons are: Nyangrel Nyima Wozer (1124-92), Guru Chowang (1212-70), Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405), Ugyen Pemalingpa (1450-1521) and Dongak Lingpa (1820–92). Of these, two others are closely associated with Bhutan: Guru Chowang revealed Terma in Bumthang, and has descendants in the Kurto region; Dorje Lingpa's family seat is to this day in the upper Tang valley, and he revealed Terma at Jampa amongst other places, including both of the Bon and of the Nyingma traditions; see Dudjom Rimpoche, *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* p. 789.
Terton is usually spelt *gter ston*, meaning "to show or teach Treasure", and can also be spelt *gter bton*, meaning "to reveal Treasure". In the term *gter rnyed,* used by Olschak and others, *rnyed* has the ordinary sense of 'finding', and is inappropriate in the context of the sacred Termas.

frequently - or, to put it another way, with reduced power, due to the general spiritual weakness of the society and environment of which they are an integral part.

The doctrine of how these Treasures came to be created and concealed, and then later revealed at the predestined times under circumstances shrouded in prophecy, mystery and miracle, is one of the most fascinating and little-known chapters of Tibetan or Vajrayana Buddhism.

The interest of the subject, moreover, is far from being historical only. Created by Guru Padmasambhava and then concealed for the future, these spiritual treasures and their discoverers have, today, an immense and continuing significance for the adherents of Vajrayana, most especially for those of the Nyingma school. Their origin and validity have, naturally, often been the subject of controversy, not least amongst rival schools of thought within the Tibetan world itself. And, whilst many scholars have shown understandable scepticism, the Vajrayana Buddhist can - with justification - argue that such criticism has often been based on rather inadequate understanding of the complex doctrines and processes involved.

Ugyen Pemalingpa, in addition, forms a remarkable and in some ways almost unique figure within this tradition. He began his life as a blacksmith, and emerged into fame from a most simple background in one of the secluded valleys of the Bumthang region of Monyul, in what is now central Bhutan; a sacred region that has for centuries borne the footprints of saints and sages. The events of his life, and the significance of those events, are depicted in PadmaTshewang's biography, which forms the main part of the present book. Our introduction aims to provide, first, a brief review of the cultural-historical setting within which the Terma tradition unfolded, and thereafter some background information relevant to the doctrine of Terma itself.

The Schools of Tibetan Buddhism

The many schools of Buddhism are generally classed into two principal strands: that of Theravada, practised today mainly in the southern Asian countries such as Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka; and that of Mahayana, which became prevalent in the far-flung Tibetan world including Bhutan as well as in China, Korea and Japan.

Within the northern regions of the pan-Tibetan world, the particular form of Mahayana Tantric Buddhism known as Vajrayana, the 'Diamond Vehicle', developed, and it is considered by its adherents to be the highest refinement of the Buddhist path. It has often been called Lamaism (though this name is usually rejected nowadays), and even seen as a separate third strand of Buddhism. Thus these three forms are referred to by the Tibetan Buddhist as respectively the Lesser, the Greater and the Unsurpassable Vehicles[6].

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6 These three are respectively: *theg pa chung ba, theg pa chen po* and *rdo rje theg pa.* The Vajrayana vehicle is often called the 'Adamantine', from the Greek *adamas* meaning unyielding.

Let us recall that the pan-Tibetan cultural sphere included Tibet itself and also Mongolia, Kashmir, Sikkim, Ladakh and Bhutan, as well as large parts of China, Northern Nepal and India. This was a vast and disparate area, a collection of parts united often only by their religion, and of which today only Bhutan survives as an independent, Vajrayana Buddhist state.

Tibet was for long periods a hierocratic state, or alternately, a loose collection of hierocratic entities; its history was thus dominated by the links between secular and religious affairs, and by the at times benign, at others internecine rivalries between the various schools and subsects of Vajrayana. Amongst these, the most widely known today is the 'Yellow Hat' or Gelug school, headed by the Dalai Lamas; which had been the dominant group in Tibet for several centuries. The three other major schools continuing today are the Sakya, the Nyingma and the Kagyu schools. Generally speaking, today they are very close, and have the greatest tolerance of each other, despite historic rivalries. The high lamas of each school are accorded great reverence by members of all the schools, who will place their pictures as prominently on their household altars as those of their own lamas, and will be almost equally keen to receive teachings and blessings from Masters of the other schools.

The tradition of Terma however, is principally, though not uniquely, associated with the Nyingma or 'Old School'. In Pemalingpa's homeland of present-day Bhutan, Nyingma and Kagyu are the two dominant schools. Amongst these various schools of Tibetan Buddhism, it is the Nyingmapas who are also claimed to have the most refined esoteric doctrines and methods, the pinnacle of these being Atiyoga or Dzogchen, 'The Great Perfection', which is referred to quite often by Padma Tshewang in his biography of Pemalingpa. But, as we shall discuss below, the Terma tradition is not by any means unique to the Nyingmapas.

Nyingma: The Historical Background

Though the tradition of hidden Treasures is usually associated with the Nyingma school, and with the famous eighth-century sage Padmasambhava, a basis for the tradition is often pointed to in the teachings of the Buddha, Shakyamuni. In support of this viewpoint many quotations from early Sutras can be found such as the following.

In the *Arya-dharmasamgiti*, we find: "People who have well-being of mind, even if the Buddha is not present, will receive Dharma from the midst of the sky, walls or trees..."

Or, from the *Arya-sarvapunyasamuccayasamadhi-nama-mahayanasutra*: "For the great Bodhisattvas who wish for Dharma, the Dharma Treasures have been concealed in mountains, at the base of mountains, and in the trees. The means of Dharma and dharanis will come into their hands in the form of volumes" [7].

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7 These two are given as quoted in: Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, p.241 and p.59.

Thus, according particularly to the Nyingma view, the Buddha himself expounded the doctrine of the Concealed Treasures and foretold their occurrence. Centuries later Guru Padmasambhava, who created and hid the Termas, is seen to have confirmed and spread that doctrine.

Although earlier influences both from the Kashmiri, Central Asian and Chinese sides is certain, Buddhism was first introduced in a major way into the Tibetan world from India from the seventh century onwards. This first great period of propagation occurred under the kings of the Yarlung dynasty, during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. It was a time of intense activity, with the founding of many monasteries, and the translation and dissemination of thousands of Buddhist teachings, under the guidance of scholars and teachers invited principally from India. The classical Tibetan language Choké, which means 'language of religion', was developed specifically in order to be able to effect meticulously faithful translation of the Buddha's Sacred Word. One of the greatest, and perhaps semi-legendary, of the sages of those times was Padmasambhava, who to his followers is also known as Guru Rinpoche and as the 'Second Buddha' and almost supersedes the historical Buddha in importance. He is said to have come to Tibet in the spring of 747 A.D. and to have been there for a period of perhaps fifteen years in all, although opinions vary on these dates.

During this period, Buddhism's foreign influence in Tibet was opposed by traditionalist elements amongst the nobility and clergy, including the religious school which became known as Bonpo. Bon claims to be the oldest Tibetan religion, and by the common syncretic process it came in time to bear many resemblances to Buddhism. Bon continues today as a fifth strand of Tibetan religion, and is in several ways closest to the Nyingma branch. It is well established that there were "quite deep connections and spiritual interactions between the ancient Bon religion and the Buddhism of Tibet" [8].

Buddhism was then heavily suppressed during the time of the 'heretic king', Langdarma, in the middle of the ninth century, and Tibet entered a dark age for Buddhism for nearly a century.

Langdarma destroyed the monastic communities, forcing the monks to break their vows by marrying or by committing various foul acts, and a period of civil war ensued. The king himself was assassinated. Whilst the Vinaya tradition was broken, the Tantric tradition and practice was kept alive. In particular it is recorded that the monk Nub Sangyé Yeshé so awed Langdarma by his display of powers, that the king thought better to leave his kind alone[9]. Thus it was that though the monastic tradition was largely broken, the practice of Buddhism continued in far-off regions such as Kham by a few monks; from whence it later began to spread anew. More Buddhist influence also spread

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8 Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead*, p.11.

9 Nub Sangyé Yeshé: some sources however suggest considerably later dates for him, e.g. early tenth century. See for example Karmay, "The Rdzogs chen in its Earliest Text ...", *Soundings* p.272.

south to Bhutan as a result of these events, due to the migration there of many Tibetans including Langdarma's own brother, the prince Lhasé Tsangma [10].

It is important to note that the above is the Nyingmapas' view which insists that the tradition was never interrupted totally; whereas the 'orthodox' view of the Gelugpas, and that which has been accepted by many scholars, is that the tradition and the continuity, so crucial in Vajrayana Buddhism, was broken during those times.

The Terma tradition is based on the belief that Guru Padmasambhava, in anticipation of the suppression to come, concealed thousands of religious texts and artefacts, all over the Tibetan world. Most of the textual material was written in secret or symbolic scripts. These Treasures were intended to be rediscovered at the appropriate times in later centuries, under his divine guidance, and Termas are still being revealed today. Various lists and prophecies in this regard were set up by him and his helpers.

In the Tibetan tradition, paramount importance is placed on the ability to trace one's teachings in an unbroken line back through the Indian sages to the time of Buddha Sakyamuni himself. Person-to-person transmission of wisdom between succeeding lamas and pupils is essential.

When Buddhism spread anew in Tibet, several new schools emerged, and their rivalries were often entwined with secular politics; thus at different times the Kadampa, Sakyapa and Karma Kagyupa groups enjoyed hegemony before the rise of the Gelugpas as the dominant power. The older form of Buddhism became known as the Nyingma, and the later ones as the Sarma or New Schools [11]. Since the newer schools could easily show their legitimacy, because their founders had direct links to the Indian lineages, Nyingma continuity through the times of suppression was not always accepted. There was thus an additional urge for them to reconfirm their historical legitimacy. Termas, by making a direct link back to Guru Padmasambhava, supported this purpose.

Although Terma is particular to the Nyingma school, Tertons have appeared in all the major schools; great Kagyupa and Sakyapa as well as many Bon saints have been Treasure Revealers, as well as a few Gelugpa figures, most notably the great Fifth Dalai Lama who was a follower of the Terma tradition [12]. And so too, many Terma teachings are to this day practised by members of the other schools.

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10 *Lhasé Tsangma*: translation (1992) by Butters and Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi of the *Bod rje mnga' bdag...* by Tenzin Dorjé, Thimphu 1984, q.v. This work is a collated version, with additions, of the *Rgyal rigs* (1728) by the Bhutanese monk Wagindra. An uncollated, earlier version has been translated by Aris in his: *Sources for the History of Bhutan,* p.11-85.

11 The *Sarma* schools mean the 'new translation' schools, whereas the Nyingma school bases itself on the 'old', reputedly original translations of the Tantras. This issue of textual legitimacy is very pertinent for the subject of the Terma.

12 Cf. for example Kapstein: "... although gter-ston have appeared in all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism ..." in: "The Shangs-pa bKa-brgyud ...", *Tibetan Studies*, p.138.

There is little reason to doubt that texts and sacred objects were indeed concealed to avoid their destruction. This has been done in many cultures. Such concealment is, however, not the essence of Terma. Some scholars have expressed doubt whether the Termas have even a nucleus of ancient origin. In fact it is quite certain that, in a sense, many of them do not. But such questions are based on a misunderstanding, which will be discussed below.

After taking a closer look at the doctrine and history of the Terma, it will be appropriate to add a few words on the Buddhist notion of 'proof'. For whilst it is clear enough that the Terma system is open to manipulation, and surely has been abused on occasions, it is equally apparent that many have not really understood the nature and the workings of the tradition, especially its metaphysical support; and have hence been sceptical on the basis of erroneous or simply irrelevant grounds.

2. THE TERMA TRADITION

To date, not very much has been written by scholars about the Terma traditions. The only full book on Terma in English is Tulku Thondup Rinpoche's *Hidden Teachings of Tibet,* which is indispensable reading. Eva Dargyay's *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet* has large portions on Terma; and so does the chapter on the Nyingma lineages in Keith Dowman's *Sky Dancer*, the biography of Yeshé Tshogyal which is itself a Terma. Many issues relating to Terma have also been addressed by Janet Gyatso, from whom a work on the Terton Jigmé Lingpa is keenly awaited. The recent book by Michael Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*, is discussed in a separate chapter, since its first half deals specifically with Pemalingpa. Amongst other scholars who have devoted particular attention to Terma, can be mentioned Anne-Marie Blondeau, Matthew Kapstein, Per Kværne, Samten G. Karmay and Ramon Prats. Apart from the above, the subject has received little attention and most general works on Tibetan Buddhism deal only very briefly with the subject, if at all. In Tibetan there are of course many large works giving both explanations of the doctrines, and extensive commentaries; in addition to the numerous biographies or hagiographies of the best known Tertons. Some of these major sources are noted in our bibliography.

The following is a necessarily short introduction to the theory and practice of this very complex subject.

The Nature of Termas

Termas are revealed treasures of a religious nature and may be of three principal kinds: objects such as statues, bells and ritual daggers; religious texts; and holy medicinal substances[13]. Pemalingpa revealed Termas of many kinds during his astonishing career. Our discussion here, however, will concern mainly the case of the Terma texts, for it is

13 Other kinds of Terma are said to include amulets, engravings, jewels, daggers, masks, paintings, robes, holy water, as well as larger items such as bridges and hidden valleys. Cf. Dudjom Rimpoche, op.cit. vol.2 p.321; also Thondup, Dargyay.

here that both the doctrine and the practicalities are at once most complex, and most relevant for our study of the Bumthang Terton.

Firstly, the Termas, with only a few exceptions, are said all to have been created and concealed by Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava. He was assisted in this vast undertaking both by his closest disciples and by the female skyfarers known as Dakinis as well as by other divine helpers. His principal assistant was his consort, the Dakini and probably historical personage Yeshé Tshogyal[14]. The Termas were said to be created by him to be discovered by particular Tertons at predetermined times in the future. Their spiritual power and the teachings they contain are thus intended to come forth for humankind at the appropriate place and time.

Hidden in the eighth century, Termas began to be rediscovered from about the eleventh century onwards[15]. According to the accepted classification, five King or Sovereign Tertons were to appear, 100 Great Tertons and about 1000 Minor Tertons. To date, somewhat over 400 Tertons have been recognised, including all the five 'Sovereigns'.

It should be stressed that the spiritual treasures concealed by the Guru are said to have been concealed for the future, not in physical form but in what we might call the 'Universal Mind'. The text-scrolls or objects found serve only by way of keys which awaken a message in the mind of the discoverers, who already have the knowledge within themselves, transmitted and stored there by the Guru by means of what is technically known as the principle of Mind-Mandate Transmission[16]. There are some exceptions to this rule, just as there are a few female Tertons to be found amongst the generally male ranks. The 'awakening' of the Tertons is only possible through their great faith, and they will often as it were feel as if they are suddenly recalling something they knew previously.

A particular characteristic of Buddhist Terma scriptures is thus that they are indigenous to the Tibetan region, whilst still being considered as the direct word of the Buddha. Their special legitimisation through the processes of discovery and recognition

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14 Dakini (Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*); skyfarer, female guide; interpreted in psychological terms by Lama Govinda as the mover of the psyche who "redeems the treasures of aeons of experience, which lie dormant in the subconscious, and raises them into the realms of higher consciousness, beyond that of our intellect" (*Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p.91).

15 The first Terton is usually said to be Sangyé Lama (1000-1080). Nagarjuna's recovery of the *Prajnaparamitas* from the Naga realms is sometimes cited as an early example of Terma, and the tradition clearly has its antecedents in the region. In the Bon religion especially, the Terma tradition appears to have started somewhat earlier. However it should be stressed that discoveries such as the Tun-Huang finds are not to be seen as Termas.

16 Mind-Mandate Transmission: *gtad rgya*, cf. Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings* p.236 n.121: "...the transmission and concealment take place in the essential nature of the mind of a disciple by (Guru Rinpoche's) power of concentration".

as Termas, sets them in a class apart from other inspired teachings, which are called 'Pure Vision' revelations [17].

There are many categories of Terma. Thondup suggests eighteen kinds, but their appellations sometimes overlap, and no great degree of clarity appears possible, nor indeed particularly necessary, on this issue. In his *Short Biography*, Guru Rinpoche himself makes reference to eight main kinds[18]. The various appellations refer to the places of discovery (such as Lake Treasure or Rock Treasure); to their nature (such as Material Treasure, Mind Treasure); and to other circumstances, such as Crowd Treasure, revealed in public, or Twice-Revealed Treasure, which is concealed and rediscovered two or more times.

Above all, however, it must be stressed that Termas should not be understood as simply a collection of ancient objects and documents. They have never been conceived of in this way, as the following passage from Yeshé Tshogyal's biography illustrates: "Some wrote in Sanskrit, some in the Dakini script, some in Newari, some in letters of fire, some in letters of water, some in letters of air..."[19]. Similarly, appellations such as 'Mind Treasure' indicate clearly enough that Termas are often not to be connected with any physical manifestation at all. Frequently the revelation comes from within the mind, without the trigger or support of any physical object being unearthed. Pemalingpa was a discoverer principally of Earth, Rock and Lake Termas, that is, revelations based on finds which were indeed of a concrete, physical nature.

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17 Pure Vision (*dag snang*) teachings are distinct from Terma. Kværne and others have noted an apparent development in the Terma tradition, from the first phase (ninth to eleventh centuries) where finds were most often of a physical or 'archaeological' kind, to subsequent phases where finds "... tend to be surrounded with increasing frequency by supernatural phenomena such as dreams, visions, prophecies, etc." (Kværne, 'Canon', p.34) and a growing emphasis on Mind Treasures. However since physical finds of Earth Treasures continue to be discovered to this day, one should perhaps not make too much of this development.

18 In the *Bka' thang bsdus pa*, the *Short Biography of Guru Rinpoche*, the following eight principal kinds are listed in the fourteenth stanza:

Emaho! Fourteenth are shown the Eight Hidden Treasures.
For the appropriate times, my Mind Treasures are hidden,
For believing, seeing, hearing are the Secret Treasures sealed.
In Dakini scripts and scrolls are the Profound Treasures written,
For the wonder of all are the Termas Twice-Concealed.
To relieve and enlighten the poor are my Wealth Treasures made,
For the sake of all beings are the Minor Ter displayed;
For minds hard to move are my Double Treasures,
For maintaining Bliss are the Ultimate Treasures.
In this verse have the Eightfold Hidden Treasures been shown.

The eight types here are: *dgongs gter, gsang gter, zab gter, yang gter, nor gter, gter phran, gter gnyis* and *thugs gter*. See also Dudjom Rimpoche, *op.cit.* vol.2 p.69, for the eighteen kinds according to Sangyé Lingpa's *Bka' thang gser 'phreng ma.*

19 Dowman, *Sky Dancer,* p.122.

The Treasure Teachings

Concerning textual Termas in particular, some words of clarification are needed. This kind of Terma, which strictly speaking may be called *ter-chos*, is almost never a fully written out text when it is discovered. There are many hundreds of volumes of such texts among the Buddhist and Bonpo literature. Many are large volumes of several hundred folios, which would make storage or concealment inside small holes or statues, let alone under water, most improbable. Whilst a few are indeed discovered in the form of complete texts, most often what is discovered is only a small scroll consisting of a few words or lines, and occasionally of no more than one or two symbol-like characters. The doctrine identifies three types of text found, depending on how much is there: 'full text', 'just indicated' or 'just visible'[20].

This again illustrates how the Terma discovered is no more than a kind of highly condensed version or 'clue', which the appropriate Terton alone will be able to decipher. This he can do by intuitive insight, through the fact of his mind being in perfect attunement with that of the concealer, Guru Padmasambhava. The clue or trigger found then inspires him, as the vehicle of the Guru, and he is able to write out and explain the full text, and to transmit its wisdom to others.

As most Terma texts have been hidden for posterity in the form of special cyphers and codes, such as the 'Dakini script', it is notable that independent verification of their contents is, by nature, impossible. Generally speaking, the 'Dakini letters' (see our illustrations) look like strange variations and permutations on the Tibetan characters; but even should some characters be recognisable to others, the destined Terton alone will be able to apprehend the full meaning contained therein.

The Nyingma Tertons may also during those centuries have felt some pressure to legitimise their works and inspirations under the name of Termas, though this does not explain at all why Tertons appeared in other schools of Vajrayana which had no need for this form of 'historical legitimisation'. As we shall discuss below, the issue of empirical proof occupies a subsidiary importance within the Terma tradition in any event.

Thus, it is true enough to say that in an objective sense the Terma texts are very largely the work of the Tertons themselves; but in spiritual terms they are seen as the work of the 'Universal Mind', the Mind of the Guru, and nothing less.

The above also illustrates that most Termas were, from the outset, conceived of as rather close to what in the Christian tradition might be called works of revelation. Apart from a few texts which are recovered in complete form, most, physically speaking, consist at best of fragments of ancient writings. They are not archaeological finds. This point seems to have been misunderstood at times.

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20 These are respectively: *yongs rdzogs mthong ba*, *brda mtshon byed* and *yud tsam mthong ba*.

In modern times, great Nyingma figures like Kongtrul Lodoe Thayé and Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo have led an important spiritual revival of a non-sectarian nature in the Tibetan Buddhist world, and in the course of this have revivified the Terma lineages. In the process, a conceptual shift has also appeared, whereby Termas are now to a larger extent considered as works of Mind.

The central purpose of the Treasure teachings is to provide followers of the Dharma with fresh or 'direct' sources of wisdom and spiritual power, as compared to the centuries of transmission from person to person of the classical lineages, where it is considered possible that some adulteration or weakening of the Teachings may occur.

The Terton's Activities

Tertons are in most cases to be found amongst the ranks of lamas and sages whose high spiritual standing is already established; but occasionally a layman and even an unschooled person, such as Pemalingpa, may show themselves to be the vehicle for this inspired activity.

The Terton is led to a discovery - or usually to a series of discoveries, perhaps at the same location on different occasions - by various forms of inspiration such as Pemalingpa's trances and dreams. The Terma is usually discovered in the environs of extraordinary natural features in the landscape, and often under supernatural circumstances. Once extracted, the contents are as a rule not shown to other people at once, but on a determined auspicious occasion later. In some cases the full text of a Terma may not be written out until years afterwards, as the appropriate time and inspiration will not be forthcoming to the Terton immediately.

When extracting these Treasures from their 'power places', the most correct spiritual and ritual preparations must be done, and local deities have to be propitiated very carefully, otherwise great difficulties and also physical harm may result to the Terton or to those around him. It is recorded in the case of several Tertons, including Pemalingpa, that errors or misfortunes did indeed occur occasionally with various disastrous effects.

These difficulties surrounding the Terton's practice are all ascribed to the exceptional nature and power of Terma: since spiritual power also affects the physical domain of life according to the most basic view of the Buddhist. Thus Pemalingpa, for example, was only able to reveal about one third of over 100 Termas destined for him, but he is regarded as having been immensely successful.

All the omens must be correct, and though sometimes the Terton may achieve the task alone, often he needs assistants who, too, must at all costs be the right persons, and people of outstanding faith.

Two stories - the symbolic content of which is surely as important as their historicity - may illustrate the above issues. The first concerns the Terton Rolpé Dorjé,

who retrieved a Terma from a lake in Tibet. As he was swimming up to the surface, he was attacked by a water-monster. He called out to his disciple on the shore for help, telling him to throw stones at the beast. His disciple looked around and saw not a stone, not even a pebble in sight. Then, with good presence of mind, he shouted back that he would do so, bent down as if picking up a stone, and hurled the imaginary object at the beast. The monster then retreated; thus the disciple, not by real physical intervention but by his skill and faith, succeeded in assisting his master, and the Terma was recovered without mishap.

The absence of helpers led to a less fortunate incident for the Terton Karma Lingpa. He was writing out the full text of a Terma when his bamboo pen needed sharpening. (To sharpen a pen for such tasks, one needs a very special knife). He called outside for any of his disciples, but none of them were there to attend on him. Then his wife, seeing him, laughed disrespectfully and threw an old kitchen knife to him. It hit him and cut him deeply on the thigh. The result of this bad auspice was that the text of Karma Lingpa could not be completed, and it is incomplete to this day: the Terton died shortly afterwards.

Whereas the above two episodes illustrate problems associated with the recovery of Terma, the Terton Ratna Lingpa, whom we shall meet again in Padma Tshewang's text, is famous for having recovered all of his finds without ever running into bad omens and effects. His Treasure texts are thereby accorded a particular reverence and importance, since they were so clearly recovered by the right person, at the right time and without any hindrances at all.

Once he has gained possession of a cryptic text, perhaps in the form of a few symbols only, the Terton has to attain the inspirational key or insight into it, which may come naturally and immediately or may require a great deal of time, effort and meditation. He will then be able to expand the Terma to its full form, running perhaps into several volumes, and to explain its deepest meanings. The writing down of the full text may occur very rapidly, once begun, and in a kind of a trance state. There are many examples recorded such as that of Pemalingpa's writing out of a 57-page text in one morning. Thondup similarly cites examples of Tertons who could dictate different texts to five scribes simultaneously. Vajrayana Buddhists insist that such inspired feats are to be witnessed in our own times too.

In some cases other persons may be destined to partake in this process, such as Pemalingpa's scribe from the Ura valley, who alone appears to have held the key to transcribing one particular text of his.

Following the right auspices most carefully the Terton will be able to show and expound the Teachings contained in his Terma to selected disciples and to the public, and to transmit them to his chosen followers through the rituals of authorisation.

Earth and Mind Treasures

In recent times most Termas discovered have been of the 'Mind' class, although physical finds still occur. The discovery of a Terma belonging to the Phurpa class of texts, as recently as 1990, can be mentioned as an example. This Terma was revealed at Paro Taktsang, the very holy cliffside sanctuary in western Bhutan, by Khenpo Jigmé Phuntshok, a famous living Terton who is also known as Sogyal Rinpoché. His entourage were naturally very moved by the event, and wished for immediate teachings on the Treasure. The scroll found, however, consisted of just twelve stanzas; and the Terton told them that when written out in full, the text would amount to nine volumes[21].

Earth Treasures including statues and original fragments of scroll are, where they survive, amongst the most sacred possessions of monasteries and some high lamas. Several of the statues said to be revealed as Terma by Pemalingpa are to be found in Bhutan today. Scrolls or parchments are obviously unlikely to survive many centuries, and we have not been able to ascertain whether any of Pemalingpa's still exist. Examples of original Terma scrolls are, however, shown in some exceptional photographs in Tulku Thondup's book.

'Twice Concealed Treasures' are Earth Termas that for some reason have to be reconcealed for later times, not always at the original location. It may be that the time is not right, that the Terton did not proceed correctly, or that the teaching contained will be forgotten later and need to be rediscovered, or for other reasons. Thus we read that Pemalingpa's very first Terma "bore the sign that it was to be extracted, not reconcealed". So, even having found a Terma, one may find (or receive subsequently) an instruction to put it back. In a similar vein, Pemalingpa was on one occasion brought a Terma by someone else, and begged to take it since it had been extracted by the wrong person and was causing all kinds of misfortunes.

Generally, it is said in the tradition that Termas of the Earth type are particularly difficult and dangerous to extract. But the fact that termas of a physical kind continue to be found today, even if more seldom, perhaps lends support to the validity of the tradition. On the one hand, any attempt at faking is far more difficult these days, and on the other, there is no longer the same demand for historical legitimisation. Quite recently, foreign observers were also witness to the extraction of a Terma from a rock in Tibet by a female Terton before a crowd of people. In short, the tradition continues to this day [22].

In the case of Termas of the Mind class, the clue may be seen by the Terton in a dream, or written in the sky, or perceived as sound. But the 'awakening' of the Terton, whatever form it takes, is in all cases the work of Guru Padmasambhava.

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21 The Terton it seems went to Bhutan specifically in order to attempt to reveal this Terma, since the place and year for its discovery were stated in an old prophecy.

22 Hanna, "Vast as the Sky: the Terma Tradition in Modern Tibet".

Certain spots have become renowned due to repeated discoveries of Termas. Paro Taktsang and the Bumthang valley in general, are two such places within Bhutan, as well as Chalkha west of Paro and Sengé Dzong in the far north-east. These are places said to have been visited by the greatest sages through the centuries, and the scenes of many miracles and manifestations. Thus the entire landscape bears marks and memories; the Termas could also be seen more generally as specific manifestations of the living landscape itself, of the forces available to those whose attitude to their environment is one of constant mindfulness and deep reverence. Sigmund K. Sætereng explores these connections in the last section of this book.

The Terma Texts

The texts found are often small pieces of the kind referred to as 'Yellow Scrolls', which may in fact be of various colours. They may be in a variety of scripts, and the text or cryptic symbols may sometimes be found written not on a scroll but on a stone or other object. An added mystery is that although the visible codes such as the Dakini script stay the same, only the destined Terton can decipher the texts. Some parts may be understandable to others. Thus in many finds such as Pemalingpa's, there is a 'Certificate' which often gives the Tertons the location of their next destined find, and then an 'Inner Message', perhaps just the title of the Terma at hand, and these two parts may be comprehensible to other persons; but the third part, the 'Secret Contents', containing the essence of the text itself, will be understood only by the Terton.

Texts such as the Yellow Scrolls are usually kept by the Terton and not shown to others. Often, however, the original seed-text or other symbolic clue in Dakini script is reproduced when the full text is written down, and is to be seen at the beginning of the texts as we have them today.

Most Tertons find a kind of prophetic list of the Treasures they are destined to reveal during their careers. This they keep secretly for their own guidance. The list usually contains cryptic indications of names, dates and places. The various lists and kinds of instructions, the *khajang* or certificates, are a very important element in the Terma tradition, and have been discussed in detail by Janet Gyatso[23].

These 'prophecy lists' have of course been the subject of particular scrutiny on the part of sceptics. The system is conceivably open to abuse like the rest of the process, since the Tertons could fill out this prophecy list later as their careers unfolded. The process involved is, however, rather more complex than that. Another question we might ask is whether people generally recognised as outstanding spiritual figures tend to lie. At least, as Padma Tshewang reminds us, we have to consider the Buddhist concepts of Relative Truth and Absolute Truth very carefully.

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23 Gyatso, "The Relic Text As Prophecy..." q.v. The outer, inner and secret parts of the *khajang* are respectively: *kha byang*, *yang byang* and *gsang byang*.

The texts revealed as Termas may be of many kinds. Although relating occasionally to mundane matters, they are nearly always religious in nature. Very many relate to liturgy and meditation rituals. These include instructions for making of the appropriate mandalas, offerings, prayers and so on. Many of Pemalingpa's finds are of this kind, and some are in use all over the Vajrayana Buddhist world to this day. Other Termas are doctrinal and philosophical in nature, and others prophetic. Some deal with biography, sacred architecture and medicine. The sacred dances of Pemalingpa comprise yet another type of spiritual revelation.

Terma Treasures in Bhutan

Pemalingpa's home, Bumthang, has been a centre of great spiritual importance not only for the Bhutanese for the entire Tibetan Buddhist world for many centuries, and is referred to as far back as the time of the great Yarlung kings. Many of the greatest saints visited Bumthang, as did Guru Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tshogyal. Many greater and lesser Tertons have also made discoveries there; particularly at sites such as Kurjé, Jampa, Tsilung and Rimochen. Other holy sites in Bhutan have been mentioned above. In various prophecies, such as those attributed to Guru Rinpoche and the Sindhu Raja text, these sites are mentioned along with Mebartsho, Thowadrak, Khenpalung and others [24].

The Validity of the Termas

It is largely irrelevant whether Termas are or are not genuinely ancient items. Their miraculous status, on the other hand, is always of importance.

One could, for sure, make scientific investigations of the type done a few years ago for the Shroud of Turin - which did finally prove that particular sacred relic to be a fake. Such extravagant empiricism, however, does nothing to alter the nature nor the validity of the Christian faith. The value and the significance of the Terma lie elsewhere; quite simply, a whole culture considers them important, precious and above all, effective, as spiritual means. Their primary significance and reality is their lived reality. In the words of Eliade: "By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself... a sacred stone remains a stone; but for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted... the *sacred* is equivalent to a *power* and, in the last analysis, to *reality*"[25]. And it is in this sense that Buddhist philosophy deliberately seeks to supersede the often tenuous distinction between objective and subjective phenomena.

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24 For example, eight of the places prophesied in the *Thangyig* are in Bhutan: these are given by Olschak, op.cit. p.56 as: Mon-kha bum-thang, Mon-kha spa-gro, Mon-kha chu-phug, sTag-tshang za-blung, Me-'bar-tsho, Lho-mon-phyogs, hBum-thang rtsi-lung and mChod-rten dkar-po (spellings *sic*). The *Short Kathang* mentions four: Brag dmar gya' ma, Mon kha shri rdzong, Seng ge rdzong and Spa gro stag tshang phug.

25 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p.202.

It is beyond the scope of this brief introduction to discuss the shades of meaning between signs, icons, symbols and so on. Yet the 'magical' footprints (*zhabjé*) left by the saint are, above all else, reminders of Pemalingpa's time, his place and his person. They function, if we let them do so, as bridges over the 'Three Separatenesses' of Buddhism[26] to which we shall return. Pemalingpa, like his previous incarnation Longchen Rabjam, and Guru Padmasambhava himself, left magical marks of his passing in many places. The most famous footprint of Pemalingpa is that in a stone preserved at Kunzangdrak monastery, and others can be found in several places in the Chel valley notably. Longchen's marks can be seen at Tharpaling, the Guru's at Paro Taktsang, Kurjé and many other places far and wide. A particularly endearing case is the tiny footprint, said to be of a very young princess-consort of the Guru, in a stone at the Tang Rimochen temple, sacred site of some of Pemalingpa's Treasure finds. There is no doubt that these so-called 'power places' seem to acquire the ability to jog even the dullest psyche quite forcefully, and surely their power is gained not least through the devotion paid to them through many centuries.

Thus these spiritual marks on the physical landscape always have, primarily, a non-physical significance. This function, transcending factuality, was lucidly enough described by a Jesuit traveller of the fifteenth century, speaking of the Buddha's footprint (some say Adam's, others Vishnu's, and he believed it that of St. Thomas!) on Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka: "... for as God made him Apostle of the world, so everywhere did he leave traces of his presence"[27]. Thus 'trace' and 'symbol' are not far removed from each other. Such marks have a status similar to that of the Terma statues and Terma texts themselves: they are living reminders of a living presence.

Both Pemalingpa as well as his landscape are 'living' in the sense that they still partake, at one level or another, in the same, continuing process. This is a culture and its identity. Whatever the source of inspiration, Pemalingpa as representative of his community is a provider of nourishment for the community and for the culture as a whole. The sacred dances and similar rituals are, as we know, on at least one level very closely connected with the propitiation or worship of various spirits of the Earth. For some this may be lived as shamanism, but there is no doubt whatsoever that the deeper levels of meaning in this, are to foster a keener, compassionate mindfulness towards all of nature, towards all our environment, in the widest sense. The significance, noted by Sigmund K. Sætereng, of the agreement between Sherpa villagers and their mountain goddess or Buddhist symbol Tseringma, tells us the same.

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26 The Three Separatenesses (*lkog 'gyur gsum*): *dus kyi kal ba*, *yul gyi kal ba* and *shes pa'i kal ba*: the divisions respectively of time, of place and of understanding or person. All communication is the act of trying to bridge the divide between ourselves and other people or events.

27 Quoted in Aksland, *The Sacred Footprint*, p.107. One could cite many books on this subject; this one is particularly apt since it describes one and the same footprint which was believed in as 'their' miracle by followers of four of the great religions - Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus and Christians.

We see that Pemalingpa is a personality totally immersed in the everyday world of his community, as well as in the totality of the natural world around him. He is an ordinary person, a man of village life and manual crafts and probably of failings as well; and he is (at the same time) the Buddhahood that is within all ordinariness. Thus he stands for, and in the best sense of the word reveals, the Absolute Truth that is within ordinary people, ordinary speech, ordinary lakes and rocks.

In a Vajrayana Buddhist society, practical life is the foundation of wisdom, and it is thus the life of people, not of just ideas, that contains the message which we may look for. The particular attraction of a figure like Terton Pemalingpa for a small, rural Buddhist society lies perhaps most of all in that he appears not as an exalted lama or renowned hermit but as an ordinary person, through whom the profound Treasures within all things may be revealed. This everyday relevance is perhaps what makes the stocky figure of the Bumthang Terton so enduring.

The Termas live varied lives: some are forgotten at times, revived at others; some are widely known in certain regions and unknown in others; particular ones are meaningful to some individuals and meaningless to others. These three, Time, Place and Person, are the 'Three Separatenesses' of Buddhism referred to above. The significance of Terma is their living significance, as opposed to their inanimate significance such as their physical origin, their chemical composition or their historical date.

Other cultures are all too familiar with the problem of trying to 'keep alive' or reinterpret their ancient and unalterable Holy Books. The direct, and indigenous, form of spiritual wisdom of the Treasure Teachings offers the Nyingma school in particular the possibility for a dynamic, constantly revived Canon and practice. In human terms, the *psychological* impact and freshness of the Terma system is perhaps its greatest strength.

Seen as a whole, the Termas comprise a very large and quite remarkable body of writings; they are unmistakeably something far more than a random collection of mystical outpourings. In addition, to be recognised as genuine Termas these texts must meet a large set of quite rigorous criteria, which are discussed further in the last part of this book. They must also stand the test of time; that is, the practice of a Terma teaching must be experienced as effective and powerful over many generations. They must, equally importantly, be shown never to have resulted in any harm. And not least, Terma texts must receive the seal of approval of subsequent spiritual leaders. Accredited with supreme insight in the case of the Termas are the 'Four Recognisers', pictured in this book[28]. They are very great lamas whose intellect, wisdom, and integrity, are exceptionally highly regarded within all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

We have stated above that scepticism towards the Termas has sometimes been on mistaken, if not irrelevant, grounds. Whilst miracles, in any culture, tend by their nature

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28 The Four Recognisers are: the Fifth Dalai Lama (seventeenth century), Terdak Lingpa (seventeenth century), Kongtrul Lodoe Thayé (nineteenth century) and the late Dudjom Rinpoche (twentieth century).

to be outside the sphere of verification by 'outsiders', the Buddhist position on the issue of 'proof' is quite central in the case of a subject like that of Terma, and we shall therefore examine this briefly.

3. THE ISSUE OF PROOF IN BUDDHISM

One may approach miracles with the uncritical heart of the 'insider', the believer in Christianity, or Buddhism, or simply the believer in all things magical and mystical from far away. Or one may approach them with the rational and critical eye of the modern world, which says that producing a scroll from within a rock is as impossible as, say, walking on water.

But there is an essential difference between the Buddhist view of this question and the modern, many would say Western, view (though one has to include modern, Buddhist Japan too, for the scientific-rational mind is a quasi-universal phenomenon; and on the other hand the gnostic schools of Christianity have always maintained a view very similar to that of the Buddhists). This difference is well summed up in the words of C.G.Jung again: "the ever-present, unspoken assumption (of Tibetan Buddhism) is the antinomian character of all metaphysical assertions... not the niggardly 'either-or' but a magnificently affirmative 'both-and': this statement may appear objectionable to the western philosopher, for the West loves clarity and unambiguity "[29].

This is to say that empirical proof generally occupies a different status in Buddhism. For in Buddhism, 'Reality' and 'Truth' are to a greater extent than in most religions, internalised. To one who believes only in objective reality, belief in miracles (which requires faith) is contradictory to empirical truth; whereas in the Buddhist view, there is no contradiction since there is ultimately, no such dividing line between physical and spiritual, between subjective and objective truths (although one should add that there is a high degree of internal plurality in Buddhist thought). It is in this area that various parallels - valid if simplified - have been drawn between Buddhist thought and the 'total life world' of Merleau-Ponty and the phenomenological philosophers in general, as well as with other trends of modern thought.

The Buddhist concepts of Relative and Absolute Truth are referred to often by Padma Tshewang in his discussion of Pemalingpa, and they are fundamental to consideration of a subject like Terma[30]. Absolute Truth is immutable and indescribable; it is *Shunyata*, the Emptiness of all conceptions and mental constructs whatsoever. It can only be grasped or apprehended by the whole person, body, heart and mind. Relative Truth on the other hand is mundane everyday experience, and is dependent on time, on

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29 Jung, *Collected Works Vol.11, Psychology and Religion: West and East,* p.511.

30 *Don dam bden pa* is ultimate or Absolute Truth; *kun rdzob bden pa* is conditional, conventional or Relative Truth. The *Tripitaka* is often described as Relative Truth (*drang don*), requiring interpretation; and the Madhyamika as Absolute Truth (*nges don*), i.e. definitive teachings. The Nyingmapas stress that these two are not to be seen as ultimately different.

place and on person. It is by no means 'unreal', as the Brahman or the Pythagorean might have it, nor is it 'more' real, as is the view of science.

Science, as every good scientist admits, only offers models; they may be extremely useful, but that should not overrule the basic attitude of sceptical reserve towards all hard and fast conclusions regarding reality, otherwise science becomes a faith little different from any other. Nor does the scientific form of cognition demand the committed engagement of heart and spirit, the real work of self-knowledge and compassion for others, which according to the Buddhist is the *only* way to genuine insight, genuine acquaintance with Absolute Truth.

According to Buddhist philosophy, then, to deny the possibility of miracles is as partial and as deluded as trying to prove them. These are just the two complementary sides of the empirical view, e.g. a view concerned in the last resort with objective reality - which our thoughts can never touch directly - even Western science is agreed on that. Nor is Buddhism particularly concerned to insist that all miracles 'must' have happened, for reasons of faith - which is like denying one's eyes and common sense. We shall return to this issue the last part of this book in connection with the Karmapa lama's reaction to Pemalingpa.

Did Jesus walk on water? Could Pemalingpa have left his footprints on a stone? To the Buddhist these questions are not absurd, but they are absurd *if* they lead one to categorical assertions about the nature of reality. Viewed in a certain way, as Padma Tshewang says, reality can deceive us; viewed in another way, it can only tell us the truth we allow it to. The Buddhist concept of Emptiness is about the need to avoid, and to go beyond, all such categorising.

Thus it is unfortunate if issues like that of Terma are approached with *only* the Mind of "the rational, critical scholars of the 20th century"[31] - which *can* only lead to the foregone conclusion that Pemalingpa and his like, in all cultures, were either cheating people, or have become bathed in pure legend. That is to miss the significance of the subject being studied; and it is certainly to miss the Buddhist point of view itself.

So, when discussing Terma and other miraculous phenomena, Vajrayana Buddhists will quite freely admit that there may be elements of fraud, and of myth, in their annals. For the Christian, by comparison, the central events of the Bible can not be seen as fraud or myth without the whole edifice collapsing.

Or is this really true? It is interesting to reflect on the way in which the so-called 'development process' (which is above all, a process within people) affects the status of miracles. In modern-day Europe one can scientifically prove holy relics to be fakes without seriously disturbing many Christians. Similarly, in Norway for example, the dozens of stone footprints allegedly left by the great saint-king Olav (and even by his horse, like Pemalingpa's), are increasingly viewed today in their symbolic dimension,

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31 Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives* p.97.

which was the creation by that king of the Norwegian national identity; and their physical status bothers no-one. The living meaning does not necessarily become devalued by disbelief in the physical phenomenon.

But the Buddhist adds to this, by saying that what one sees is dependent on one's *ability* to see. It would not prove anything, they say, to subject Pemalingpa's Termas to carbon-dating or other scientific tests. Neither a machine, nor the ordinary eye, can perceive miracles or phenomena such as the Buddha marks: only spiritually keen vision - which is an attribute of one's whole being - can do so.

Thus, as Dowman crucially points out, "to a large extent the terma theory provides a metaphysical support that *displaces* dependence on" empirical factuality[32].

Certainly in studying a Buddhist subject, one may impose one's own view; but Buddhists will insist that the conventional academic approach to subjects like Terma cannot possibly be sufficient; and one reason for this book is to offer a closer look at the Buddhist approach itself.

Three Types of Proof

Within the long and scholarly traditions of Buddhist logic and philosophy, there are clear methods and criteria for proving or disproving one's position. The Buddhist generally identifies three types of correct reasoning. Firstly, reasoning based on cogent evidence, that is on empirical observation and dialectical logic; secondly, reason based on renown; and thirdly, reason based on conviction or faith [33].

In the modern world, processes of evaluation and analysis are still based quite heavily on the first of these, the mental-rational sphere. This kind of reasoning, which is at once characteristic of the scientific mentality and expressive of the Western world view, is an extremely powerful tool; but there are large parts of reality which it does not deal with.

The second and third types of reasoning noted above are particularly important in questions of religion. The third type, reasoning by faith, is the experiential fulcrum in most religions, and few people would argue with its status or function. But the second type of reasoning, that which is based on renown, requires attention, and the implications of this type of reasoning need to be considered closely.

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32 Dowman, *Sky Dancer* p.274.

33 Proof': see Stcherbatsky, in *Buddhist Logic, Vol.2*, especially section 1 on Perception. More fundamentally, perhaps, Buddhism is concerned to avoid dogmatic hypothesis, as Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p.46 reminds us: "instead of the usual opposition between affirmation and negation, Buddha substituted the more fundamental one between dogmatism and criticism. This is his middle position (Madhyama pratipad)...a no-position that supersedes them both".

Reasoning by renown is the 'proof' which is formed by the mutually supportive judgements of skilled people. It presupposes that we accept conclusions and judgements made by others than ourselves. (It is, incidentally, not unlike the Delphi method of establishing prognoses which has become an effective modern tool used by international Oil companies and others in recent years). The *opinions* of others - opinions backed perhaps by much rational thought too, but opinions nevertheless - are accepted as valid working hypotheses, and are found extremely effective.

So the Buddhist definition of empirical truth, that "right knowledge is knowledge not contradicted by experience" [34], embraces the rather obvious notion that those with most experience, know best. For Buddhism is a very reasonable religion. And it would be incredible, were the cumulative judgements of a society's greatest members not accorded important status by that society.

Dogmatism is rare in Buddhists, and the Buddhist attitude of tolerant scepticism rests in turn upon the foundation stone of Compassion. But Compassion is surely the opposite of indifference. Buddhists should not turn a blind eye to incorrect or misleading scholarship, for it could harm both their traditions, and the respect which good scholars should enjoy. Thus the attempts of a foreign scholar to suggest that the Tertons are frauds, should not be left unanswered.

It is equally important to add that in the Buddhist view, all three types of reasoning must be employed, and the conclusions must be mutually supporting. This kind of tripartite - and ultimately holistic - critical appraisal is applied to figures such as the Tertons, over many centuries. It is thus of prime importance that the status and genuinity of Tertons such as Pemalingpa have been confirmed, through the centuries, by leading figures from all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Their lives and their works are fascinating, and their significance has been immense. The outward 'miracles' are principally significant only as attestations to an inner, cultural and spiritual meaning.

We turn now to the story of the life and works of the Bhutanese Terton, Pemalingpa.

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34 Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic vol.2* , p.12.

PART I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF PEMALINGPA

by PADMA TSHEWANG

གཏེར་སྟོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་པོ་ཉང་རལ་ཉི་མ་འོད་ཟེར་གོང་མ།

A. The first Sovereign Terton,
Nyangrel Nyima Wozer

གཏེར་སྟོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉིས་པ་གུ་རུ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག་འོག་མ།

B. The second Sovereign Terton,
Guru Chowang

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, the Fourth Buddha, prophesied himself that there would appear one more exalted than he; that is, our Lord Guru Padmasambhava. I pay homage to Pemalingpa, the Heart Son of the Guru.

The emanation of Avalokiteshvara, most exalted Lobsang Gyatsho, Fifth Dalai Lama cites in his works the prophecy of Guru Padmasambhava: "There will be Five Terton Kings and one Hundred Great Tertons".

Of the Five Terton Kings, the Upper Ter is known as that of Nyangrel Nyima Wozer, the Lower Ter is that of Guru Chowang; thereafter came Dorjé Lingpa, Pemalingpa and Dongak Lingpa. There are a number of prophecies about them. Thus I have written a biography of Terton Pemalingpa, relying not on my own poor understanding but on the Adamantine Speech of many great saints before me. May this book serve to make Pemalingpa better known to the world, and to dispel the lack of knowledge concerning the Terma tradition.

The omniscient Longchen Rabjam's work *The Hidden Valley of the Flower Garland*[1] contains the following praise of Bumthang:

"Many great kings and ministers have graced these valleys,
And many are the magnificent monasteries there".

Of the four major valleys of Bumthang in Bhutan - Chokhor, Chumé, Tang and Ura - the place called Chel Baridrang is in the Tang district. Here the great Pemalingpa was born, of the Myo clan, in the fifteenth century: he quickly acquired great knowledge and miraculous powers due to the achievements of his former lives; and as prophesied, he came to reveal many Treasures, benefiting the Dharma far and wide throughout our land and Tibet.

To understand such saints fully demands great insight and knowledge. May this book help to dispel scepticism which is based on unknowing, and may it serve to make Pemalingpa widely known and loved.

There are four principles which all genuine Buddhist texts must fulfil. These relate to the Subject Matter, the Purpose, the Ultimate Purpose, and the Relationships of these parts to the whole.

The **Subject Matter** of Pemalingpa's Treasure texts concerns in particular the Inner Tantra and the Quintessential Teachings transmission. These are the teachings of the unsurpassable Pure Mind.

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1 From Longchenpa's 'Flower Garland', *Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod ma me tog skyed tshal*, Collected Works vol. *Shri*.

The **Purpose** of his Treasures is the general welfare of all sentient beings; they were expounded and practised by him in accordance with the revelations and instructions which he received directly from Guru Padmasambhava and the Dakinis.

The **Ultimate Purpose** of the Treasure texts is liberation from the Five Poisonous Delusions and from the oceans of suffering of the Three Realms. By practising these Teachings, one can attain supreme Enlightenment, even within the course of one lifetime.

In the **Relationships** of these parts to the whole, there is seen to be complete accordance. This has been reconfirmed over and over during the centuries.

Thus, Terton Pemalingpa's Termas fulfil the four principles; they have within them the three classes of Good Qualities and are free of the six Evil Qualities[2].

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Sigmund K. Sætereng, the Norwegian philosopher currently doing research in the field of Ecology; to Chris Butters, the architect, who lives in Bhutan and is skilled both in writing and reading Tibetan texts and also in grasping their Buddhist meaning; and to Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, my constant assistant. They have all spent many hours, not only for rendering into English but also for discussions and for the modifications to my text which we decided upon.

Written nearby the Tashichodzong, in October 1991.

Padma Tshewang.

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2 The three good and six bad qualities of a text are stated concisely in the following verse: *don med don log don dang ldan / ngan g.yo brtse bral sdug bsngal spong / thos rtsod sgrub pa lhur len pa'i / bstan bcos drug bral gsum du sdud.*

CHAPTER 1: OF OMNISCIENT AND SENTIENT BEINGS

THE NATURE OF BUDDHAHOOD

Even though I am lacking in the depth of knowledge and scriptural proficiency required for the demanding task ahead, the drawing up of a proper biography of the great Pemalingpa, I have accepted the challenge through the grace of Padma Kara and my spiritual master, and through my birth in a land of religion, where the biography of Pemalingpa's life may flow spontaneously through me, the humble vehicle.

Through the gracious mediation of our Lord Buddha's religion, we are told in the *Samadhiraja Sutra* that "the Buddha Nature pervades all sentient beings, and the highest goal is to seek to engender and propagate the Bodhi spirit for the welfare of all beings." Thus, all beings are naturally imbued with Buddhahood and can attain Enlightenment. Similarly in another Sutra it is said that "Buddhahood is the source, it is everybody's nature, from beginningless time"[3]. This is what we have to understand: our own nature, which is Buddha; and when we have realised this, the most important insight, we must then develop it, so that it may spread throughout the worlds.

In other words, the seed is in all of us: and its fruit is the recognition that there is no difference, no difference at all between the heavenly Buddhas and ourselves.

Buddhas are those who have freed themselves of all the delusions originating in Ignorance and Attachments, the two prime obstacles to clarity. The abandonment of these delusions is the natural outcome of the miraculous insight acquired by the Enlightened Ones. But most sentient beings, in their everyday samsaric state, are very, very far from that state of selfless compassion.

This search for liberation from ignorance and passions leads to the realisation of Great Compassion and the Wisdom of Emptiness[4], which are the twin roots of spiritual progress. Understanding of the doctrine of Emptiness and of its relation to Great Compassion, marks the decisive stage on the way.

However, a prerequisite for grasping the nature of the two obstructions and the twin realisation of Compassion and Emptiness, is a study of the *Tripitaka (Vinaya, Abhidharma and Sutra*) so thorough that their meaning is totally revealed to and integrated into our being. Through this only may we gradually remove the obstructions within us; the final stage of the process being the intuitive, incomparable, and miraculous Supreme Awakening.

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3 These sources are the *Ting nge 'dzin rgyal po'i mdo* and the *Rgyud me 'byung rgyal po'i mdo.*

4 Great Compassion, Great Emptiness: respectively *snying rje chen po* and *stong pa nyid chen po*; fundamental terms common to all Mahayana Buddhist schools. Compassion is the active, male principle; Emptiness the passive, female principle. (Here as elsewhere in these notes, we attempt only to give some comment on the most essential concepts discussed in this book, or on those particular to the Nyingma school).

And it follows that unless we have abandoned these obscurations afflicting ourselves, we are incapable of discerning the true character of others, their positive and negative qualities. To know others, first we must know clearly these qualities as they exist within ourselves.

The Natural Truth Body, the primordial Essence of Being, is beyond virtues and non-virtues[5]. It is non-composite, and so has the characteristic of clear, uncontaminated Light. This state of Being is therefore all-pervading, omniscient.

In omniscience can be grasped, instantaneously, all the operations of cause and effect, the relationships of place and time and eternity. This is the unsurpassable gift of clear consciousness.

In order to go this way, one must have the deepest motivation, which is called Bodhicitta: it is not for self that enlightenment is to be sought, but for the sake of helping all other beings from their suffering. Only on the basis of pure and selfless motivation can a state of unblemished virtue be reached.

And though not all may develop this great motivation, all ordinary people can understand the importance of overcoming ignorance and passions and, despite relative lack of effort, they can enhance their insight and strengthen their good qualities.

Today, we can find some people who believe they possess unobscured vision, as if their grasp of reality were superhuman. But if they are not liberated from their enclosed selves, they can have no such wisdom. In our tradition a conventional term for such individuals is 'Masters of Falsity'[6]. They may pose as Bodhisattvas, but are really to be seen as the very opposite. Similarly there are some who claim prophetic abilities; but they mistake the impressions of untrained minds for genuine, self-liberated insight.

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5 The Natural Truth Body is the first of the Buddhist trinity of *chos sku*, *long sku* and *sprul sku*, respectively Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya, definitions of which can be found in most books on Buddhism. In the first stanza of the Invocation poem I have rendered these as "Formless Void", "Qualities" and "Manifest". A simplified rendering might be: the Absolute, the Heavenly and the Worldly.
Sambhogakaya is translated in various obscure ways, such as 'Enjoyment Body' or 'Body of Co-Fruition', and the following comment from Guenther and Chogyam Trungpa may be noted (op.cit., p.64-65): "Kaya refers to the existential fact of being, and sambhoga to being in communication with dharmakaya. The sambhogakaya is between the dharmakaya and the nirmanakaya. It is dependent upon and in communion with the dharmakaya. It is the level on which, as it is said, the teaching of the Buddha goes on uninterruptedly in that the person tuned in to this level always hears the dharma taught. This is, of course, a figurative way of speaking. Then from the sambhogakaya there is a further condensation which is the nirmanakaya..." A fourth term, Svabhavikakaya (*ngo bo nyid sku*), is sometimes added: it is an all-inclusive term over the three.

6 Masters of Untruth': *mi chos bla ma'i brdzun.*

The clear, unobscured inner vision of the Lord Buddha is like the pure, unpolluted oil that completely permeates a mustard seed. In a like manner, one who has attained the full Awakening is omniscient; his awareness touches and partakes of the whole universe just as the mustard oil in the seed. So the essential universe is that known by supreme Enlightenment: it is not other than the moving worlds of shadows, desires and illusions, but it encompasses them and by knowing it, the transient and confusing worlds no longer have power over us. In the final state of attainment, all phenomena disappear; there are no separate entities, such as the ego, and the Mind's natural reality is that of non-separateness.

THE LAW OF KARMA

The law of Karma is operative everywhere in the universe; leading to good or bad propensities; which manifest as innumerable different kinds of sentient beings. These kinds differ in many ways; and one such difference lies in their ways of perceiving the world. This is illustrated in the Buddhist Wheel of Existence. If we take, for example, the substance human beings perceive as water: the god-beings in the same place see elixir, the *pretas* or hungry ghosts see foulness, like blood and pus, while the hell-beings will perceive scorching molten metal. It is the Buddhist view that our different deeds, good and bad, have this effect amongst others; continually reshaping us and our ways of perceiving the world[7].

Lord Buddha's body differs from any other bodies; it is said in the scriptures that its perfection is given visible expression through the different types of marks or signs on the body of living Buddhas[8]. The question of these marks, too, is as illustration of how an enlightened being differs from an ordinary being. Their karmic situations are quite different. Those of high karmic maturity are able to see the marks of Buddhahood, whereas others will perceive the same manifestation differently - with faults and demerits - even as ugly. A classic story tells of the evil ones who tried to distract Shakyamuni Buddha from his meditation under the Bodhi tree. In their low karmic state, they were unable to see they were in the presence of an awakening Buddha.

It is karmic progression that determines our ability to see; to discern the truth or to be deceived. This karmic law finds expression in our times, equally, in people who are unable to see the marks of a Buddha, who can not sense the presence of saintliness, due to their own limitations. So too there are limits to how far a non-Buddhist can penetrate into the core of Buddha's message. This has to do partly with the academic scholar's vision, which may have progressed to some extent through learned studies of books, but

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7 The Wheel of Life (*srid-pa'i 'khor-lo*): the well known Buddhist diagram depicting six realms or classes of Beings: Hell-Beings, Hungry Ghosts, Animals, Humans, Titans and Godlike Beings. These illustrate the karmic law that our existences are conditioned by our deeds, and correspondingly, so are our ways of seeing.

8 The thirty-two or eighty Marks of a Buddha: *mtshan bzang po sum cu so gnyis* and *dpe byed bzang po brgyad cu.*

lacks the important inner development; since his studies have not been those of a seeker of truth and enlightenment. Neither the motivation, nor the practice, are there.

THE BUDDHISTS PATHS

The ability to understand Buddhist personalities clearly, is dependent on one's following the methods of learning which are inherent in the Buddhist tradition; and they are methods that have taken many centuries to refine. Not only knowledge of doctrine is important; so also is the character of the seeker, and equally his actual practice and meditation. Through all these, understanding is gained. We speak of 'Basis, Path and Fruit'[9]. The Fruit will not appear without the Basis having been established, fully explored, and verified all along the way; and the same applies to the Path. As said before: it is absolutely necessary to comprehend the *Tripitaka* thoroughly in order to come to a full understanding the Buddhist tradition and way of thinking. This is not the same as approaching Buddhist questions with the world view and methodological principles of a different culture.

One can add that this concerns not only one's own understanding, but also one's effect on the life of that tradition and culture. By an unenlightened approach, one may significantly harm that tradition and the people who are at one with it. In the Christian religion, for example, it is accepted that relevation and sainthood are special phenomena, with special import for those within that religion. It is accepted that there are 'inside' and 'outside' approaches: and that one cannot gain an adequate understanding of Christianity's miracles and saints, unless one approaches as an active, committed follower. If not, one cannot talk about 'truth' - not in the sense that is relevant for Christians.

This applies to the great Masters of Treasure, the Buddhist Tertons, in particular. Such masters are not just ordinary historical figures, but lights spanning as it were many ordinary lives.

For full understanding of the Buddhist tradition, one begins by thorough study of the classical Theravada doctrines and by practice of their meditative methods. One must then continue through the higher developments of Theravada and in this way go on to Mahayana. But again, the motivation or goal must be that of a seeker of enlightenment. If the study is done just out of scholarly curiosity, or to gain acclaim, then deep, genuine understanding cannot possibly result.

If the subject of study is an issue or personality of great religious importance in the Vajrayana lands, then it is necessary to know the doctrine, character and meditational practices of the Diamond Vehicle in particular. It is also necessary, in order to comprehend that vehicle, to have the personal guidance of a spiritual teacher, and one who is well suited to the seeker's own personality. And finally, it is necessary to have

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9 Basis, Path and Fruit: *gzhi lam 'bras gsum*, this division being found in Tantras; the three stages of spiritual progress.

time. For some persons, many years are needed; depending, again, on the seeker's karmic situation, that is on his perception of the world and how quickly it can be expanded or raised in quality.

Those who follow the Vajrayana path, do not follow the gradual path of Emancipation from Self (the way of the *Pratimoksha Sutra*), which concentrates on the individual's shortcomings and aims to purify them over a period of many lifetimes. In the Vajrayana, the concept of the Five Poisonous Delusions[10] is replaced by that of their opposites, the Five Wisdoms. By this path, the sufferings of the Wheel of Existence can be overcome and Enlightenment attained even in some cases within one lifetime. The Five Wisdoms correspond to the Five Poisons, but are their qualitative opposites: one can say that the aim is not to suppress the negative forces within the self, but to use them deliberately: to understand and master them so thoroughly that they eventually no longer operate as egoistic poisons, but as positive energies of selflessness.

This can be illustrated by the image of the peacock, an often-used figure in Vajrayana: for it is a bird that eats, and thrives on, substances which to us are poisons: not only is it not harmed by the poisons, but they enhance the beauty of its plumage.

It is extremely difficult to understand Vajrayana Buddhism, the doctrine of the Diamond Body, or even simply the large numbers of divine forces: forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities. The task of learning the names and characteristics of all these alone, is seldom achieved by outsiders[11]. The Christian religion, like others, has its own pantheon, and an equally large range of symbols and stories with which westerners are brought up; so that even if some families are not religious, these deep cultural elements are learned by and familiar to all. Vajrayana, in addition, is far more complex than the Lower and Intermediate vehicles of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

Though each school within Vajrayana Buddhism has its own path, the aim of all is attainment of the Four Bodies and the Five Wisdoms: similarly, to gain enlightenment,

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10 The Five Poisonous Delusions (*'dod chags, zhe sdang, gti mug, phrag dog, nga rgyal*) are Desire, Hatred, Sloth, Envy, Pride. Reference is also often made to the Three Delusions, being the main ones and the first three as listed above. These three also figure in the centre of the Wheel of Life, represented respectively as cockerel, snake and pig. From the psychological standpoint, Guenther and Trungpa (op.cit., p.31) clarify these as the "three basic emotional complexes: passion-lust, aversion-hatred and infatuation-bewilderment", the first two really being dependent on the third (sloth or ignorance), which they describe as a basic confusion about the real nature of things - "an absence of precision".

11 The fifty-eight Wrathful deities are described in the Terma texts of Karma Lingpa, revealer of the *Bardo Thodol*, best known of the many texts addressing the Bardo or Intermediate state. All are encountered in the after-death Bardo state amongst the 'Assembly of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities' (*zhi khro gyi lha tshogs*).

all beings must go through the basic Five Paths and Ten Stages. And fundamental to all of Buddhism are the 'Four Seals' of the Doctrine[12]. These are:

1. All existence is suffering
2. All phenomena are impermanent
3. All phenomena are void of self-nature
4. Release from these, Nirvana, is peace.

All Buddhist teachings, on whatever level, are based on these four. The same applies to the Treasure teachings too, which are powerful means towards enlightenment; they are seen as being as precious as the teachings of Lord Buddha himself.

LEVELS OF MEANING

The Buddha himself says again and again in the Sutras: "Nobody can understand the real inner character of others, except I": that is, through spiritual insight.

To confront the task of writing about a Buddhist saint, one must have a thorough understanding of the complementary concepts Relative Truth and Absolute Truth[13]. It is well accepted that some teachings of the Buddha are not meant to be interpreted literally; one has to see the inner, Absolute meaning. Such teachings cannot be comprehended by normal interpretation only, but are to be grasped as part of a totality; through a leap of insight; and by well-prepared persons who are at a stage of spiritual maturity where the full meaning can be grasped.

Among the non-ultimate or Relative types of teachings, are the four classes of Sutras (Interpretative Sutras), aimed at clarifying the intentions of the Buddha. They are: Sutras encouraging debate and discussion; Sutras concerning phenomenal characteristics; Sutras describing antidotes for wrongdoings and errors; and Sutras aimed at fostering good actions and virtues.

We must be aware of the differences between these kinds of teachings, and we must know which levels of meaning are appropriate for understanding the Body, Speech or Mind of a saint. In many cases, one is only discussing the level of non-ultimate meaning; the saint's acts and so on. Underneath - more difficult of access - lies the definitive, Absolute meaning.

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12 The Five Paths (*lam lnga*) of spiritual attainment are the Paths of Accumulation, of Preparation, of Seeing, of Meditation and of No More Learning. This doctrine is common to all Buddhists. The Ten Stages (*sa bcu*) are particular to Mahayana, and represent the levels of realisation within the mental and practical continuum of Bodhisattvas. The Four Seals (*lta ba bka' rtags kyi phyag rgya bzhi*) are: 1. *Zag bcas thams cad sdug bsngal ba* - all (contaminated) things suffer; 2. *'Du byas thams cad mi rtag pa* - all one collects is perishable; 3. *Chos thams cad stong zhing bdag med pa* - all is devoid of self-nature; 4. *Mya ngan las 'das pa zhi zhing dge ba* -peace/nirvana is in virtue.

13 See Introduction, Note 30.

To illustrate this, it may be noted that in the world of Buddhism, the character and acts of great spiritual figures often misguide and even shock those who are unfamiliar with the Buddhist teachings pertaining to sainthood. Five different kinds of apparently surprising personalities may be recognised. Some saints appear to have 'desire-attachments'; some seem to be led by 'higher anger'; others show 'higher pride'; yet others appear possessed by 'divine madness' (such as Drukpa Kunlé, whom we shall return to); and lastly some appear to their disciples and to onlookers to be driven by 'higher envy'. But all these appearances, which are quite deliberate, are examples of indefinite or Relative forms of behaviour or teaching. The absolute truth of those saints' behaviour and methods are to be understood through training, and by seeing the life of a saint as a whole, which may develop and manifest particular attributes over a period of many lives.

THE RELATIVITY OF THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING

Upon attaining enlightenment, Lord Buddha's first reaction was that his insights could not be conveyed at all: no-one would understand. It is for this reason that he gave teachings with different levels of profundity and meaning. This in turn is why there are many Dharma vehicles or paths such as the Theravada, the Intermediate Vehicle, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. There are innumerable Vehicles (*yanas*), intended for sentient beings according to their capacities.

Even within Theravada, for example, there are eighteen divisions. It is said that these divisions came about in the following way. During the far-distant time of the third Buddha Kasyapa who preceded Buddha Shakyamuni, there was an Indian King called Titi. He had a dream, in which a piece of serge cloth was shared out amongst eighteen people, yet each person received the whole cloth and at the same time the original piece remained intact. He also had ten dreams corresponding to the ten negative trends that were to happen to Buddha's teachings after his passing away into Parinirvana.

Then King Titi asked Buddha Kasyapa about these dreams, and the Buddha prophesied that in the coming time of Shakyamuni, the Theravada would be divided into eighteen parts yet each would be a valid and complete path to Enlightenment. In India there were four major doctrinal schools, yet all belonging to the Buddhist path. Similarly in the world of Vajrayana Buddhism today there are the four major schools yet all are valid[14].

14 Of the many earlier schools and subsects, the author provides one such list of eight major schools as follows: Nyingmapa, Kadampa, Sakya, Dakpo Kagyu, Shangpa Kagyu, Dukhor Jorduk, Shijé Choyul and Dorjé Sumgi Nyendrup. The 'Shangpa Lama' appears in our story as a particular foe of Pemalingpa; on the Shangpa Kagyupa school see Kapstein, op.cit. p.138-144.

THREE MODES OF YOGAS

In one of his teachings, Guru Padmasambhava says the following:

Appearances as perceived by the EYES, are all just phenomena. Do not attempt to grasp at them, but just let your natural, relaxed vision move around. Aim at an unattached, simple mode of seeing; for that is none other than the vision attained by the blissful, meditating mind. This mind is finally at one with the Truth Body. In this pure state, devotion should be given to the Guru as representing Higher Purity, free from attachment and desire.

Appearances as perceived by the EARS, the sounds you hear, are sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant; but these again are only phenomena, not Reality: remembering this, do not get agitated or caught as the sounds pass by. In the natural awakened state, which is Blissful Mind, you will instead hear, always, the Speech of the Lord Buddha: give devotion then to the natural Emptiness of the Lord Buddha's Speech.

The same pertains to MIND. Keeping to the unattached, blissful state, you may stay clear of the Five Poisonous Delusions. Do not be attached to what went before, nor to what comes next. Let your consciousness flow, without distraction, and show reverence to the sphere of Mind's Reality. Thus you will attain real mastery of Mind, becoming one with the Truth Body.

The practices aimed at in these stanzas by the Guru may be ordered in their three divisions thus:

1) the yoga of experiencing all appearances as the Body of Buddha;
2) the yoga of experiencing all sounds as the Speech of Buddha;
3) the yoga of experiencing all thoughts as the Mind of Buddha.

These are the 'three modes of Yoga' or 'the yogic practice of the three modes'[15] To investigate and follow these practices, is a prerequisite to the deeper understanding necessary for a scholar of Buddhism. Lacking this, one cannot pronounce on what is and what is not; one's pronouncements will be superficial and of little interest.

SAINTS AND ORDINARY BEINGS

We are caught inside the wheel of Samsara, as long as we are prisoners of the Five Delusions. The great Lamas, Siddhas and Yogins, as well as the Discoverers of Hidden Treasures, have realised Truth through deep reflection; they are free of those poisons. Although to ordinary observers they may appear to manifest even bad qualities, they have in the deeper way, i.e. absolutely, overcome them. They have overcome the

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15 Quoted from: *Gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma*, the very popular 'Prayer in Seven Chapters' by Guru Rinpoche.

tendency of the senses to distract and entangle us in the delusionary world. Imprisoning, negative propensities from former existences have been surmounted.

Earlier deeds, effects, or karmic bonds may be regarded rather as ripples in water. In the enlightened state, the saints have become one with the water, and are indistinguishable from it. Activity, ripples, there may be; but these are not the activities of separate selves, because their clinging selves are gone; they are just part of the water. All activities are now for the benefit of others, and can no more have any other possible effect than this.

FAITH AND REINCARNATION

Pemalingpa was an emanation of Kunkhyen Drimé Wozer (Longchen Rabjampa), one who had attained Supreme Enlightenment. At the time of his passing away, he had said: "Just as with a merchant, whose riches do not endure though he wishes to stay forever, so my life too now ends. But I have meditated for my whole life, and do not wish to stay longer here. Now I, Padmaledreltsel, go to abide in the Eternal Blissful Mind".

Death is not as the atheists conceive of it, like the snuffing out of a candle flame: nor is it like that of the Theravada meditator, who strives for aeons and aeons. The passing of one such as Kunkhyen Drimé Wozer, the time for which he chooses himself, is different. Such saints remain in the heavens until it is necessary for them to emanate in the world again. There are countless worlds, apart from that of humans, and they may thus in the meantime be manifest in some other world. If they are absent from us, it is not that they no longer wish to help us. This is also why some saints never return: there are other realms and purposes, beyond our comprehension.

But as long as the mind-to-mind relationship exists between saints and their followers, as well as the karmic bond, it is sure that they will reappear in our realm; though they may appear in various non-human forms. Their reappearance and their power are largely dependent on the continuing faith of their followers. For example Ananda, the faithful attendant of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, did not reappear for one thousand years, but then reappeared as the great translator Berotsana in the Tibetan region of Tsang-Nyemo.

Similarly another of Buddha's disciples, Litsavi Drimé Drakpa, only reappeared four hundred years later as Acharya Nagarjuna; he in turn died in the first century, reappearing again only in the twelfth, this time as Drigung Kyopa Rinpoche. Thus we see the whole process of rebirth as being subject to complex workings of cause and effect, of time and place.

As it is explained in the *Uttaratantra* and the *Prajnaparamita* teachings, amongst others: just as the light of the moon reflects wherever there is a pond of limpid water, so

if in this samsaric world there are countless devotees, then countless saints will be manifest in Samsara too[16].

And further, depending on the devotion of disciples and followers, a saint may also reappear in several emanations simultaneously[17].

These things are beyond both normal credence and normal comprehension. Study of texts, even extensive study, will not provide understanding of such matters. Only deep study combined with actual contemplative practice can bring real insight.

Though few of us can attain real understanding of such things, they are told to us by the greatest spiritual masters, who have both so much deeper learning than ourselves, and a life of contemplative practice. If we meet a person who is far more knowledgeable and far wiser than ourselves, there is good reason to believe what he tells us, and conversely no reason to dismiss it until we have genuinely studied and tested it for ourselves.

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16 Limpid: *chu'i dangs pa*; in limpid water the moon seems real. We, like limpid water, may catch or reflect Buddha: Buddhas may reflect as they wish through us to the extent that we are receptive.

17 Reincarnate lamas are technically called Tulkus; the honorific term 'Rinpoche' means 'precious' and can also be used towards any highly respected person.
To simplify, one may say that Buddhas and saints of exceptional power can divide themselves into various manifestations or embodiments. Commonly recognised are five principal ones, which are the Body, Speech, Mind, Qualities and Activity emanations. Reincarnation, in the case of ordinary beings, need not necessarily be taken too literally; Murti (op.cit. p.32) reminds us that "rebirth does not mean that the soul bodily, as an identical individual essence, transports itself from one place to another. It only means that a new series of states is generated, conditioned by the previous states". He quotes in support of this the *Salistamba-sutra*: "There is no element which migrates from this world to the other; but there is recognition, realisation, of the fruition of karma..."

INVOCATION

Eulogy to the Terton Pemalingpa[18]

Consider Formless Void, how Truth arises,
Kindly unfolding then its seven Qualities;
Gradually Qualities in turn becoming Manifest:
None other is Bumthang's holy son than these.

Jewels of Truth, no illusions your works, Pemalingpa:
Cherished, incomparable: these I must describe.
Justly scorning praise, ignoring scorn;
New moon bringing light to our dark Samsaric sky.

Tathagata, Guru, Pemalingpa:
There is no way to distinguish between these three.
Devout our praises, to you not Self nor Other,
Not leaving heaven, yet with us constantly.

Praying to you in this Dharma-blessed land,
Forever near the Treasures you revealed,
By knowing you, we know your steady hand
May help us find the Gem in us concealed.

It's said in your valley that the sunflower loves to turn
Its head to the sun like human hearts to your song;
Desire for Wisdom feebly in us burns;
When you're gone we wither, but where you shine we are strong.

Surely as we learn your meditation,
Zealously holding your image aloft in prayer,
Awaking and sleeping, all acts are contemplation;
Your strength is as Yama's, and so we are freed from fear.

Rough in vision and holding pens full of poison,
Let other scholars defile you as best they may.
Show them the light that passes through delusions,
So that their minds too may perceive effortlessly.
Here then, unfolding, the story of Pemalingpa:
Miraculous works of Body, Speech and Mind;
Confirmed by many greater than I -
Ati Guru, now show, how Truth arises !

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18 In a Tibetan convention, each line of this poem begins with a letter of the Tibetan alphabet, the thirty letters in order from *Ka* to *A*, plus two extra to complete the eight stanzas. Our translation follows this as closely as possible with corresponding English letters.

CHAPTER 2: ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

HISTORY AND TRUTH

There are said to be innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Wheel of Existence at any time, and all of them take rebirth in the Wheel for the sole purpose of aiding others on the road to Enlightenment. Pemalingpa, esteemed as one of the greatest Treasure-Revealers, is one of these. After the above introductory considerations, I now wish to present a picture of his life in some detail.

Between ourselves and such figures of the past, stands the 'Threefold Separateness' of Time, of Space and of Person or Understanding. To a large extent, the only bridges over these three chasms are those provided by person-to-person transmission and by written records. On the other hand, written records need to be understood, which is to say that right motivation, and insight, are the two necessary subjective contributions to the process of bridging that divide. Given these, the Separatenesses of Time and Place and Person can be dispelled: given these, the Knower may touch the Known.

So it is said in the *Kavyadarsha* that "literature is a necessary mirror of the world: without it, the Three Realms would always be in darkness. Thus, even so ancient a figure as Lord Drakpé Zug may, through these written characters, be touched as if he were still with us" [19].

Truth cannot be discerned from Untruth unless there are written records. History, biography, narrative, legend, all have therefore their importance as sources for future generations. There are many types of writing: story and fable, epic and poem, chronicle and history: in some, the content is shaped to a very large extent by the will and the inspiration of the writer; yet will and understanding, too, not only facts, are part of the truth of the past and the present.

Our own degree of understanding naturally determines the degree of truth of what we are writing.

Based on the texts studied here in Bhutan, I wish to give in this book both chronological and authoritative evidence, from many sources, that Pemalingpa was a king amongst the Treasure-revealers.

THE SPIRITUAL LINEAGE

In several accounts, the spiritual origins of Pemalingpa are recorded as follows. The Tibetan King Trisong Detsen had a daughter named Lhacham Padmasel, 'Bright Lotus'. This princess died suddenly, her illness caused it is said by some local demons[20].

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19 *Snyan ngag me long (Kavyadarsha)*, op.cit.

20 Trisong Detsen: the eighth century Tibetan king and famous patron of Buddhism who invited Guru Rinpoche to Tibet. Let us remind readers here of the various names of the

The King, Guru Padma and his consort Dakini Yeshé Tshogyal, all felt great sorrow at her death. But Padmasambhava said: we need not be sad, for she has attained freedom from the Five Delusions, and will never more be chained to this Wheel of Existence. And I prophesy also that she will, in the future, be reborn as Terton Padmaledreltsel, who will be the discover of the Treasure Text called the *Heart Drop of the Dakinis.*

In following lives, Lhacham Padmasel traversed several 'impure' and then five 'pure' lives, including into the maturing karmic entourage of the famous Tertons Nyangrel Nyima Wozer and Guru Chowang. In accordance with Guru Padma's prophecy, she was then born in the thirteenth century as the Terton Padmaledreltsel, and discovered the *Dakini Heart Drop* Terma[21].

The next incarnation in this line was the Treasure Revealer Drimé Wozer, also well known as Longchen Rabjampa; the greatest scholar of the Nyingmapa school and a saint having close associations with Bumthang. This last name was given him by Taisitu Jangchup Gyaltshen, ruler of Tibet at the time, and it means: 'Possessor of the Great Expanse of Knowledge'[22].

Thus several incarnations down to the time of Pemalingpa were born into the entourage of other well-known Lamas and Tertons.

In Ugyen Lingpa's *Thangyig Sheldrakma*[23] , the biography of the Second Buddha, Padmasambhava said:

An incarnation of Lhacham Padmasel will appear named Ugyen Pemalingpa, and Treasure concealed in the Burning Lake will be revealed; bearing the sign that it is not to be left there but extracted.

Guru,such as: Padmasambhava, Ugyen Rinpoche, The Second Buddha, Dorjé Chang, Ugyen Padma Jungné, Guru Padma.

21 This was the third of the five 'pure' lives mentioned. The first was as Nyangrel's consort Rigma Sangyé Kyid, the second was as Rigma Padma Drolma, consort of Guru Chowang. It should be noted that here and in a few other places, there are minor discrepancies between the readings by Padma Tshewang and Aris of Pemalingpa's autobiography. Each existence offers the potential to overcome particular challenges, and within the reincarnation system it is thus logical that maturing souls are born progressively into the entourage of great lamas, eventually incarnating as major figures themselves. The 'impure' existences, which may be as various animals or afflicted humans, are in order to work off faults, bad propensities or 'karmic debts'. The Guru's prophecies are causative, e.g. they direct certain future destinies for the sake of the Dharma.

22 Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363) spent at least fifteen years in the Bumthang region, and is especially associated with Tharpaling monastery above the Chumé valley.

23 *Thangyig Sheldrakma*, the thirteenth century biography of the Guru revealed at Yarlung Sheldrak by Ugyen Lingpa.

It is also said, in *The Prophecy of the All-Clear Mirror*[24] :

From Samyé towards the south-east, in the centre of a place shaped like a triangular hearth in the middle of Mon-yul Bumthang, called Chel, looking like the joined palms of hands, where the head waters face north-east;

Where the valley bottom faces south-east, with the circular river in the end of the valley, and the upper end of the valley is like the fringe of a parasol, ringed with trees;

In this valley of the triangle, his father Dondrup and his mother Padma, in the year of the Iron Horse, a boy Pema will be born.

Of medium build and reddish hue, handsome to behold, with the sign of prosperity, the letter AH to be seen on the back of his right hand; and on the upper part, back, and front of his body three moles.

A mole on the right; a relic at the heart the size of a pea; of inconstant character, rough in his talk and making noises like a horse.

But he is free of attachment to phenomena: he acts as he likes, spontaneously; he takes no stock of appearances; he is their destroyer.

At once religious and irreverent, only Padmasambhava is loyal to him; gradually he will attain the Bodhi Mind of Mahayana; his nature is Compassion and he will be a pillar of the faith of the Guru.

He will keep his vows and his moral duty, he will take possession of my secret Treasures, he will benefit innumerable followers and disciples.

In the faith of Padma Jungné, where all sentient beings can find liberation, all those who see, hear and touch him will be reborn as his followers.

Even those whose families offer nourishment and homage to him will prosper and be happy in their following lives: those who have contact with him will be reborn in the human realm.

And all who have received initiations and teachings from him shall attain Enlightenment.

THE PHYSICAL LINEAGE

Padmasambhava thus prophesied the name of Pemalingpa's birthplace as being Chel; that is Chel Baridrang in the Tang district of central Bhutan. It is recorded too that he was born into one of the 'Divine Clans', descended from the shining realm of the godly beings. This clan exists still, under the name Myo, and its story is as follows.

Not so very many centuries ago, when the land of Tibet first became inhabited, there was a divine child who was predestined to live in this world. At the top of a cliff, this son of the gods descended in the form of the white eagle, Jachung Karpo. The eagle's nest in the cliff, and the imprint of a claw in the rock, are still visible today. The place is called Chung Tsang Drakhung. He assumed human form, and was to be seen at times wearing the eagle skin. When asked about his origins, he replied that he was from a clan of the gods; so all the people revered him. But he had never tasted humans' food,

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24 *Lungten Kunsel Melong*, the prophetic text revealed by Pemalingpa at the start of his career, foretelling many events and revelations he was destined to make. Aris (see Part 3b) speculates that Pemalingpa 'concocted' this later in order to justify himself in retrospect.

and when he did so, on entering the human world, he became insane; from then on, he was called Myo, which means 'mad'.

The Myo clan spread, and can still be traced in U-Tsang and Kham as well as in Bhutan[25].

In particular, there was an incarnation of Nagarjuna in the Myo clan, Drigung Kyopa Rinpoche, and it was his son Zijidpal who migrated from Tibet to Bhutan, in accordance with a vision his father had. Zijidpal established a monastery called Chalkha at Paro[26]. Before becoming a monk himself, he had married a princess named Lhachig Demchog, of the Mang Kur clan. Their son was also called Demchog, this name being given by Guru Chowang.

He had come to Bhutan to fulfil the prophecy that he should set up a monastery. Not knowing where the intended site was to be found, he hurled a ritual drum into the sky, with a loud oath to the Gods, and swearing that the monastery would be set up wherever that drum should happen to fall. And the drum thudded to the ground with a sound like '*sumthrang*'. After finding out that there was indeed a place of that name, he founded the monastery named Sumthrang Chozong, and lived there for many years.

Sumthrang, to the east of Bumthang, is still the seat of the Sumthrang Chojé family, though today only the ruins of this once large monastery can be seen, in a village above Ura.

At the request of his followers, Demchog Chojé took a consort in order to ensure the Myo succession, and thus the line continued down through Zhigpo Tashi Sengé, whose great-great grandson Tenpé Nyima founded Gon Lhadrang monastery near Sumthrang, later destroyed by fire. Tenpé Nyima is the grandfather of Terton Pemalingpa, and it is recorded that both he and his wife died when their son, Dondrup Zangpo, was nineteen years old. Thus there is recorded an unbroken succession right down to Pemalingpa's time.

After the death of his parents, Dondrup Zangpo left Sumthrang and settled in the valley of Chel Baridrang in the Tang district of Bumthang, where he married a woman called Pema Dronma.

AUSPICIOUS BIRTH AND YOUTH

At the time of Pemalingpa's conception, the couple each had an extra- ordinary dream. In the mother's dream, the sun and the moon shone simultaneously and a turquoise-coloured girl bearing a holy vase descended from the sky and entered the

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25 For the Myo clan lineage, see the *Myo rabs* of Lam Sangak and the article on it by Aris, "New Light...".

26 Chalkha, on the way to the Phari pass, near Bhutan's western border with Tibet. Several early Tertons revealed Termas at this location.

crown of her head. At the same moment, the father dreamed that he was a mandala filling the whole sky, which seemed to be filled with holy scriptures.

Terton Pemalingpa was born on the fifteenth of the second month in the Iron Horse Year (A.D. 1450). At his birth, Pema Dronma's sister Ashi Paldron washed the baby and held him in her lap, and he was given the name Penjor. It is recorded that rainbows shone and for three days all saw the baby encircled by light.

Pemalingpa's birth was shortly followed by that of his brother, Guru. It was inconvenient for his mother to be breastfeeding two babies at the same time, so Pemalingpa was looked after by his maternal grandfather, a blacksmith named Yonten Jangchup. For three years Pemalingpa was reared by his grandfather Yonten on a diet of flour and honey. Then, when he was three, he was taken by his grandfather to the Mani Gompa near Chel[27]. There they gave obeisance to the Lama Choyingpa, who was the son of the late master Dorjé Lingpa, and the lama said: "Blacksmith, take good care of this holy child. He will benefit the Teachings and all sentient beings".

According to Padmasambhava's prophecy, the boy was given the name Ugyen Pemalingpa. Choyingpa himself was no ordinary lama but an emanation of the Guru Padmasambhava himself. And the Guru was, as Shakyamuni Buddha himself had foretold, "one even greater than I". Padmasambhava was extraordinary amongst all Siddhas, Pandits, and the Eight Great Indian Masters, the 'Six Ornaments and the Two Excellences'[28]. Padmasambhava is the representative of all Buddhas, as well as being in particular the reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni and of Buddha Nangwa Thayé.

From the time Pemalingpa was about nine years old, he was trained by his grandfather as a blacksmith, and he learned the craft exceptionally easily, just as other great figures like the translator Dorjé Drakpa of Ra and the Terton Thangtong Gyalpo, who became experts in crafts without apparent effort. Later, he also appears to have learned Tibetan by himself..

Pemalingpa enjoyed entertaining other children by making small models of chortens, thrones and temples for them, and also by imitating sermons, religious rites, erecting prayer flags, writing texts on leaves, and going through the movements of the sacred dances for them. All of these natural propensities are to be seen as coming from his karmic background. On the other hand, he disliked both ordinary songs, and the sport of archery.

It is said that he seldom listened to others, but had very much a mind of his own, and a mind full of fancies at that. Not even his parents did he listen to.

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27 Mani Gompa, the ruins of which are in the forest below Kunzangdrak. Pemalingpa's early residences and temples all lie in the vicinity of Chel, including Kunzangling, Pemaling, and the revered sanctuary of Kunzangdrak which is built against a cliff high up on the mountains.

28 The (Indian) Six Ornaments and Two Excellences, *rgyan drug mchog gnyis*.

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We ordinary people are happy enough if we have wealth, or fame; but saints are free of such preoccupations, and that is why their acts are to be seen differently. Pemalingpa was not interested in wealth, he gave it away from one hand as soon as he had received it in the other; and in the same way, his at times rough and wayward behaviour shows how a different, convention-free impulse guided him.

But unruly he certainly was: both naughty, and with a huge appetite. His father soon gave him the nickname 'Protruding Navel', his mother called him 'Spent Merit', while local people in general jokingly called him Dondrupgyal - which means, literally, 'Lord of what he wants'.

Nevertheless, he was never known to be harmful to others, but on the contrary active for their well-being. Whenever he made a millstone for some person, or fulfilled other similar tasks, he would pray that all who should use those things would be saved from evil. That he became a craftsman such as a blacksmith is in keeping with a tradition amongst Bodhisattvas. One particular use of his being a blacksmith, in the Bumthang region, is that the people there eat mainly buckwheat or flour made from sweet buckwheat for cooking bread. Pemalingpa used to make the iron frying pans, and when doing this he used to pray for the users.

He also buried many of these pans in random spots all over the valley. He said that he concealed them so that later, the deity Dorjé Phagmo would appear and reveal them: and the imprint of the pig's nose would be visible on them[29] . Even today, some prominent families in Bumthang possess such pans.

During his youth as a blacksmith, Pemalingpa also forged knives and swords, a few of which still exist; and it is said that those who are killed by such a weapon will never return to Samsara.

That is why even Bodhisattvas learn ordinary crafts. Saints are those who must show the Path to others, and they cannot do so unless they know the world and the toils of ordinary people. The Buddha Maitreya says in the *Sutralamkara*: "If he does not make a thorough study of the five Major Sciences, even a great Bodhisattva cannot attain

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29 Iron pans (*go rlang*). The goddess Dorjé Phagmo (*Vajravarahi*) appears as a pig. Pigs are well known for their habit of digging with their noses. It seems like a playful Terma joke on Pemalingpa's part.

Enlightenment. One must know these things, normal processes and activities, in order to know what exists and to eradicate one's misconceptions of others. So also being always busy and ready to help others"[30].

30 *Rig gnas che ba lnga*: crafts, medicine, sound, logic, philosophy. (*bzo, gso ba, sgra, tshad ma, nang don rig pa*). By crafts are meant not only handicrafts, but all physical techniques, from calligraphy to courtship, as well as skills of Speech and Mind. The word *sgra* is often translated as 'grammar', but is really rather wider: it implies knowledge of all aspects of sound, from grammar to music and metre and the sound of rivers or birds. Logic is the skill of meaning and reasoning; philosophy in this Buddhist sense includes knowledge of the Canon as well as meditational practice and skills which others would define as 'spiritual'. In relation to language, one may consider the following trinity: *bzo*, the skill of writing words, *sgra*, the skill of using and assembling them, and *tshad ma*, the skill of their meanings. To complete the picture, the Five Minor Sciences (*rig gnas chung ba lnga*) are: astrology, poetics, metaphor (or synonymics), metre and drama. (*rtsis, snyan ngag, mngon brjod, sdeb sbyor, zlos gar*). Metre refers to poetry, in particular the skill of using the sounds, as well as meanings, in composing. This is an art on which Sanskrit poetry is dependent, but which is impossible in Tibetan. Thus, talking of these sciences, the Buddha Maitreya is reputed to have said for the Ṭibetans that one should know all the ten, with this one exception in practice.

CHAPTER 3: THE TERMA DISCOVERIES

THE TERMAS

Terton Pemalingpa's remarkable life was destined by Guru Rinpoche, and his activity as a spiritual figure began when he was in his mid-twenties. It came upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, according to the records, in the forms of dreams and messages leading him to his first Terma discoveries.

Thus he records the first extraordinary dream as having occurred when he was about twenty-five years old. He dreamed that he was sitting on a pile of corpses in a cemetery; he then rose to the top of the nearby mountain, from where he saw the Four Continents extending before him. The sun and the moon then came down towards him from the sky, whereupon he caught the one in his lap and put the other in the fold of his robe.

Thereafter, his activity was increasingly guided by such dreams and trances. At times they guided him in the discovery of the Treasures and in the writing out of the many Treasure Texts; on other occasions magic powers and portents were displayed, such as the imprint of his foot left in stone at Kunzangdrak. To begin, I shall recount several of his Terma discoveries, first of all the famous incidents at the 'Burning Lake'.

MEBARTSHO, THE BURNING LAKE

On the tenth of the first month of autumn in the Monkey Year, when he was twenty-seven, while staying at the Mani Gompa, he walked up into the woods behind the monastery to look for mushrooms. On his way back, he rested and fell asleep in the sun, but was suddenly awakened by a voice telling him to get up. He was startled to see standing nearby him, a monk wearing a ragged yellow robe.

This monk, a manifestation sent by Guru Rinpoche, gave Pemalingpa a scroll of paper, telling him to read it carefully. He then vanished. Looking at the scroll, Pemalingpa read the following: "During the night of the full moon this month, take five companions with you and go to fetch your destined wealth from the rock called Naring Drak which lies at the bottom end of the valley".

He showed the scroll to his father and to the nun Delek. His father said, "He is always playing around, it is a fake"; but Delek said, "Who knows if it is. It happened the same way as this with the Treasure-Revealer Ratna Lingpa too"[31].

On the appointed night, he set off, with five companions as instructed: his younger brothers Guru, Aphel, Choebum, Alek and Sonamphel. On reaching the gorge where the rock of Naring Drak is, he appeared to fall into a trance: he took off his clothes and left

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31 Ratna Lingpa (1403-1478), a Major Terton, originally from Lhodrak; as already noted in our Introduction his finds were always auspicious.

them on the path and then, as his companions watched astonished, plunged naked into Mebartsho, the Burning Lake. Under the water he found an opening in the rock face, and inside, a large cave capable of holding about one hundred people. This is *Pelgyi Phuring*, the 'Long Cave of Glory'. There was a throne there, and on it a life-size statue of the Lord Buddha. To the left of the statue were many chests of religious texts. A woman with a single eye in her forehead, clad in maroon robes, picked up one chest and handed a text to him, at the same time saying, "Run !"[32].

Looking around, he made to go out of the cave and, hearing the roar of the river, regained consciousness. Wondering how he could ever get back out through the water and up to the bank, he suddenly felt himself being lifted like a feather being blown by someone's breath. And then he was standing next to his companions on the top of the rock above the waters.

The excited group arrived back at Chel Baridrang in the middle of the night. Pemalingpa showed the chest to his parents and the nun Delek, and later also to the lamas Sonam Lhundrup and Namgyal Zangpo at Tharpaling Samtenling monastery. The lamas said, "Nobody can read it", and advised Pemalingpa to pray to the Triple Gem, since the text was predestined for him alone. Returning to Mani Gompa, Pemalingpa concentrated deeply, and again examined the Yellow Pages with great care. On this, the Scroll of Prophecy, he found the Tibetan alphabet with its subjoined and superscribed letters and vowels, and immediately below were written the corresponding letters in the Terma script. With difficulty he was then able to read the title as *Longsel Sangwa Nyingchu,* the 'Quintessence of Secrets'.

He then read further in the scroll that he should transcribe the text and give teachings for the public three months later, in the Pig Month.

His next task was to find the scribe who was destined to do the transcription. He had no idea how to go about this, but then in a dream five girls appeared before him, saying. "Your scribe is to be found in Ura; he has a limp in his left leg, and wears a red robe with blue cuffs: call him". The girls then disappeared. According to the dream, the scribe was found and called to Mani Gompa in order to transcribe the text. Here too some strange things happened. When the work was half done, the scribe's ink ran out and, thinking he would wait until the next morning to prepare more, he opened the ink pot and found it had been filled. So he could carry on immediately. Now, Tibetan ink shines, due to maize-based gum which is added to it. Later on, when the light was failing, the scribe thought to add some gum in order to see his writing better. But with the addition of the gum, the ink in the pot immediately disappeared.

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32 Mebartsho is in fact not so much a lake as a series of swirling pools, in a gorge overhung by high rocks sculpted into fantastic shapes by the waters. The one-eyed deity is Ralchigma.

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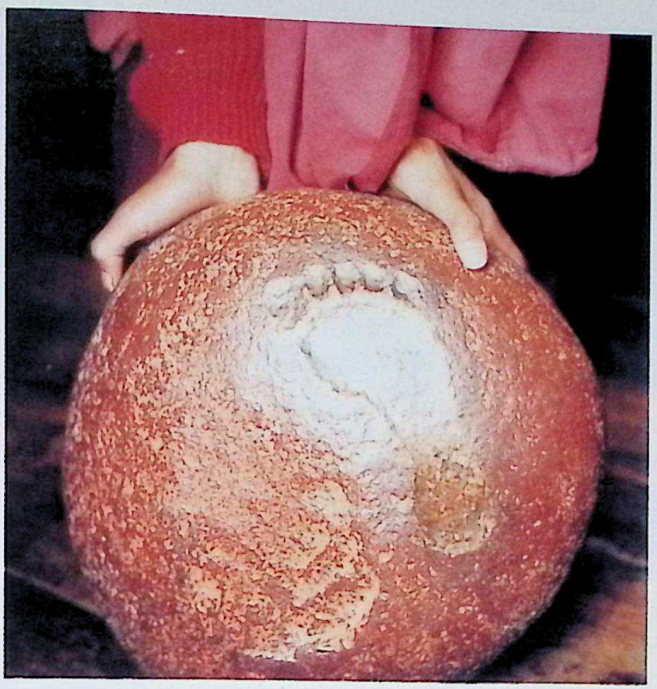

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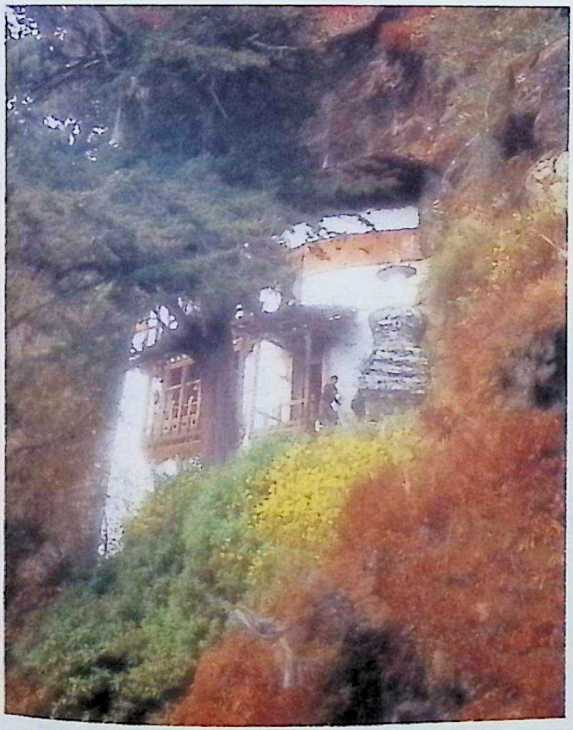

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At this time, Pemalingpa put up at the village of Dunkhabi not far from Mebartsho[33]. The lama there, Rinchen Phel, came to him and offered to arrange the initiation ceremonies for the Terma. He thus became Pemalingpa's first benefactor, and he remained an important patron to the Terton thereafter.

One night at his residence of Kunzangling he was wondering how he would conduct the coming ceremonies, realising that he had no experience at all of the performance of sacred dances, nor of the chants and gestures which were to accompany them. At that point he fell asleep, and had a new dream. Yeshé Tshogyal, the Dakini consort of Guru Padmasambhava, appeared to him dressed in the clothes of a woman of the U region of Tibet. She said: "Pemalingpa, do the chants like this", and then she sang each chapter. Then she said, "Do the Invocation of Blessings for the dances like this", and she demonstrated the dances of the Five Dakinis. He awoke, with the dream vividly in his mind, and so he recorded it and demonstrated it in stages to his followers, in the manner still maintained to this day in Bhutan.

Thus he expounded the teachings to the public at Dunkhabi over a period of about three weeks. During this period, though he had no prior knowledge of the explanations and initiation rites to be given, each night the Dakinis appeared to him giving detailed instructions of what was to be said and done on the following day. Pemalingpa did everything in accordance with these dreams, and during the performance celestial music accompanied him as well as the light of rainbows.

Later on the fourteenth of the Pig month at Dunkhabi, he had a new dream in which three girls said to him, "Tomorrow Ratna Lingpa will come to you". The next day, in mid-morning Pemalingpa suddenly felt himself becoming sleepy, so he lay down to rest on the steps of the large chorten which still stands on the hilltop there. Then in a vision he saw an old man, wearing an Ugyen Lotus cap, approaching from the east. This man did prostrations before Pemalingpa. The Terton asked: "Who are you ?", and he replied, "I am Ratna Lingpa. You, Pemalingpa, have been my master in three former lifetimes; and I am so glad to see you again, before I depart this life. I asked people whether you were in Bhutan, but I did not know until now that you were here. Now I am going to the divine palace of Guru Padmasambhava; you must continue and complete your mission for the welfare of all sentient beings".

Pemalingpa then awoke. Later, it was discovered that this had happened on the very day when Ratna Lingpa passed away.

As was written in the instructions Pemalingpa had retrieved from the Burning Lake, he was to recover more Treasure there shortly afterwards. When the time came for this, the word spread and a large crowd of people was assembled by the governor of Chokhor, Thupa, on the rock above the river. Thupa said to Pemalingpa: "If you can reveal this treasure, I shall reward you, but if not, you shall be punished for bringing this

33 Today only the large chorten remains at Dunkhabi which is said to be the geographical centre or 'heart' of the Bumthang region, about nine km. southeast of Jakar.

trickery to my district." So the saint found himself under great pressure from the governor and the local people to prove himself. Standing on the Naring Drak rock above the swirling waters, he called aloud to the Guru: "If I am a genuine revealer of your Treasures, then may I return with it now, with my lamp still burning: if I am some devil, then may I perish in the water ! " And with this prayer, holding the lighted resin lamp in his hand, he leaped into the Burning Lake.

Some of the crowd said to themselves that he had jumped into the river in shame; others said to his father that now his son was surely drowned. His parents began weeping. Thupa too was shocked and ashamed at the role he had played. He said to Pemalingpa's parents: "It is my fault, I shall make full amends to you."

But even as he said this, the figure of Pemalingpa emerged from the water below, the lamp still burning in one hand and in the other, a statue the size of a fist and a Treasure casket of joined skulls and, as if borne up on wings, he was standing beside them on the rock again.

After this incident the people's doubts about him were dispelled, he gained many followers and his renown began to spread far beyond Bumthang throughout Tibet.

These days, many people go to see Mebartsho and Naring Drak. It is impossible to see how Pemalingpa could have committed frauds such as concealing and then retrieving statues or scrolls from under water, especially with the other phenomena recorded such as his airborne return to the rock, and the still lighted resin lamp: witnessed by a large crowd many of whom were sceptical. In the fifteenth century, there was no modern equipment for contriving such hoaxes, either, even if Pemalingpa had been a particularly clever man: and Pemalingpa, like most of his contemporaries, did not know how to swim, it is said. In fact many sources say that he was in all ways a very ordinary person up until his mid-twenties.

But for contemporaries who attested to his greatness, as well as for our people today, it is clear that Pemalingpa was given his divine purpose by Guru Padmasambhava, and that there was no fraud involved. If someone shows signs of spiritual greatness, too, this adds reason to believe in the genuinity of other aspects of their life, such as miracles; even though we may not understand them.

Pemalingpa himself describes these occasions as being like other-worldly moments when he felt himself transported into a kind of trance, accompanied by visions of Dakinis and other signs which are well-known in our tradition. These are miracles such as may be found in many cultures. It is also believed, however, that such occurrences are more rare these days, since the world is in a 'declining age', where the faith of the people is less strong than before, and that truly great spiritual figures appear less frequently. It is part of the Buddhist belief that extraordinary spiritual powers and phenomena cannot occur unless people have strong Faith. Of course an outsider might reply that this is the same as saying you can only fool people if they are gullible. All the

great religions of the world, however, as well as some modern science, will warn that such questions are far more complex.

During the following years, Pemalingpa revealed a succession of Termas, mostly in the vicinity of Bumthang. At some particular places, including the Kurjé hill and the Tang Rimochen cliff, he returned to find Termas several times.

THE TERMAS OF KURJÉ

In the third month of the Tiger Year when Pemalingpa was thirty-three, he dreamed one night that a man of fair complexion, clad in white, came to him and said: "Pemalingpa, you are destined to reveal the legacy of Kurjé Gurphub; you must get it, for the local people are thinking of building a house at that spot, they will dig up the area and find it; it is impossible for me to guard it any longer". This figure was the Terma's protector deity, Shelging Karpo. Pemalingpa was wondering when the right time would be, but then the figure said: "Come tomorrow!"

The next day, he and six companions set off to the spot, and approaching it a trance again over came him. This time he saw the protector with his own eyes, and was led up to the left side of the temple precinct. The guardian produced a maroon coloured chest and gave it to Pemalingpa. Inside this chest was the Terma text known as the *Lama Drakpo* teaching.

In the Treasure scroll, he again found written the three kinds of certificates: the Outer one giving the address of a certain Lama Norbu Gyatsho; the Inner one giving the Terma's title, and the Secret one containing the essence of the Terma itself. The address given to him here led him to his next Terma, in Lhodrak.

THE LAMA NORBU GYATSHO TERMA

Pemalingpa now had the address and description of a place called Lhodrak Mendoi Drak Karpo, where he was to proceed in order to reveal his next Treasure. The text said that the Terma would be found "to the West of a place with a hearth constructed of three stones, inside a cliff looking like a lion".

Subsequently, a girl appeared to him in a dream telling him that it was time to go and collect this Terma at once, and that it was a 'Mind' Treasure. So, on the tenth day of the eighth Month in the Rabbit Year, Pemalingpa and his disciples set off to Tibet. They reached the Lhodrak region and arrived at To Leu Chung, where they put up at the house of the Lama Tonpa.

The lama asked them where they were going, and Pemalingpa replied that according to a prophecy of Padmasambhava they were going to the Mendo cliff below Lhalung to reveal a Terma there. The lama offered to assist them, and to arrange all that was needed for the rituals associated with the occasion. So he provided the grain offerings for the guardian deity, the ornaments for the ritual cakes, wine, and so on.

Following this, Pemalingpa then revealed the Terma known as *Lama Norbu Gyatsho*, one of the most widely known of all his finds, and also held religious initiations for the public.

GED DO

The Terton's next discovery brought him into contact with a family that was to figure prominently throughout the rest of his life. Their acquaintance began with a difficult incident which shows how any attempt at fraud by Pemalingpa while revealing Termas would, often, have been very difficult.

He travelled to Ged Do near Lhalung on the invitation of the chieftain Nangso Gogo Gyelwa. This man was very suspicious of Pemalingpa, and on receiving him offered no more than a coarse blanket for him to sit on the floor - not a finely covered seat as would be expected. He did not allow Pemalingpa's attendants into the room, either, being suspicious that they might assist their master in cheating should they overhear them talking about the place where the Terma was supposed to be, by going to the place ahead of the others to deposit some texts or icons.

Pemalingpa thus remained alone in the company of the Nangso and his son Nangso Wangyel while they drank tea. The elder Nangso said sarcastically: "I have heard of the Terton who is supposed to have appeared in Bumthang, but until now I could not meet you. So now you had better reveal a Terma, if I am to believe in you". But Pemalingpa answered: "I doubt whether there is a Treasure here". The Nangso replied that there must be, since it was so stated in the prophecies of both Dorjé Lingpa and Guru Chowang.

Pemalingpa then examined his prophecy guide, and found the prophecy regarding the spot. It stated that the Treasure would be found in the rock of Drakmothrang. Pemalingpa then read on, and found the precise description as follows: thirteen fathoms from the top of the cliff face, there would be found a mark like a swastika, one hand's breadth in size, coloured vermilion, and just below this a protruding stone. By taking out the stone, a Terma chest of the horsehead deity Tamdrin Chagrel would be found.

So, under the watchful eye of the Nangso, and with a crowd of people following, Pemalingpa was shown to the top of the cliff. Then the Nangso's son noticed the swastika sign, and began to think that Pemalingpa might indeed be able to extract a Treasure. So he asked the saint, more respectfully now, how they should proceed. Pemalingpa said that if the Nangso wished, he could set about the task; but the elder Nangso said he felt there would be some trouble or obstacle due to the many people gathered.

Pemalingpa removed his robes and put on a Tibetan trouser instead; then a long rope was tied around his waist and he was lowered down the cliff face to the mark, carrying a chisel. Finding the spot, he succeeded in prising the stone loose, and as prophesied, reaching inside the hole he found a small chest.

But then, with the crowd now breaking out into a loud clamour, some confusion arose and whilst Pemalingpa was trying to complete the necessary rituals, those at the top started trying to hoist him up again. Being jolted thus, Pemalingpa dropped his ritual thunderbolt, and was unable to put it into the hole to replace the Terma, as should be done.

When Pemalingpa was safely on the cliff top again, all the people declared their faith in him. The elder Nangso requested Pemalingpa to become his benefactor, and was then given the 'Ugyen Lotus' blessing.

The Nangso now addressed him with deepest respect: "Great sir, until now I had only heard of you from others, some saying you were a Revealer and others saying you were a fraud. Now I have no more doubts. You must stay in our village as our lama, and particularly as my personal Root Lama. I take refuge in you, both for the rest of my life and for the next".

Upon his request, Pemalingpa then proceeded to the village, accompanied by a large procession in his honour. There he gave the Long Life Initiation during three days, and the Nangso, from now on a lifelong patron, made many offerings to him.

TANG RIMOCHEN

When Pemalingpa was thirty-five years old, he set out on a trip to Kurélung and on the way stayed one night at the small temple of Tang Rimochen which is about two days' walk north-east of Bumthang[34]. His disciples were wondering whether he intended to find a Terma here, and if so wished to witness its discovery, but he had told them nothing. So when he was asleep they sewed up the door of his tent and slept outside it, to make sure he could not slip out without their knowing. But Pemalingpa came out somehow and, in a trance, went to the top of the Rimochen cliff. There he recovered a glass vase from within the rock, filled with the Water of Long Life; the neck of the vase was shaped like two peacocks' necks intertwined. When Pemalingpa took it from its hiding place, the sound of the Six-Syllable Mantra was heard in all the vicinity, also rousing his disciples, who awoke to see the Terton flying down to the top of a nearby tree, and from there he alighted at the door of his tent. At this point he came out of his trance state. The monks cut open the threads with which they had sewn up his door. Then he touched all present on the crown of their heads with the vase in blessing, and gave a drop of the holy water to each. The lifespan of those who received this blessing was said to have been increased, people and cattle with infectious diseases were miraculously cured, and the region experienced an exceptional harvest. So too, many of the Kurélung people were led to salvation.

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34 The name Tak Rimochen refers to the tiger-stripe patterns on the cliff there. The location is also sometimes called Tang Rimochen, after the Tang valley, or (incorrectly) Drak Rimochen, *drak* meaning cliff. A famous Drak Rimochen is also to be found in Tibet.

THE VAJRA ROCK

Once when Pemalingpa was staying at Kunzangdrak monastery, which is high up on the mountain face overlooking the Chel valley, he dreamed of a monk, accompanied by three girls in Tibetan dress, who said to him: "Pemalingpa, you must get up now". He awoke, but felt only half conscious and could not understand what was happening. Then the three girls called him again, saying: "Go to the bottom of the valley, east of Tharpaling[35]. At the place known as the Vajra rock, go to the south face, and in front of it you will find a spring: nearby there is a *benag* tree growing against the cliff, and there high up you will see a shining red stone, with the letter "A" in vermilion on it. Measure one fathom to the right of this and you will find the door of the Treasure, marked like a swastika; you will find a hole the size of an egg. Do as we say, put in a wooden dagger, and you will find a statue of Vajrasattva a cubit in size, together with the instructions of the Vajrasattva Actualisation Practice, on a scroll four fingers long. Do this on the tenth day of the Sheep month."

Pemalingpa and about a dozen of his disciples made the preparations to go there, and set out on the eighth, for it is about two days walk south of Tang. They arrived at the nearby village of Jadrak on the ninth and went to investigate the place, at first finding nothing but the *benag* tree and the cliff face where the rock is as smooth as a mirror. His disciples made a long bamboo ladder of sixty steps in preparation for the next day. But that night, the Terton had another dream, this time of a black man who simply said, "Now is the time to go!" In a trance, Pemalingpa got up and dressed. Going alone up to the Vajra rock, he scaled it and recovered the Treasures which had been described; but as he descended, the trance left him, and he found himself still a little way up on the cliff face, unable to descend. However his disciples had followed him, bringing a burning torch with them. Pemalingpa handed the Treasure chest down to them, and then managed to descend the rock face. All the disciples were amazed at his miraculous ascent and descent of the sheer cliff without need of the ladder.

The above examples are taken from the records of Pemalingpa's many finds. In some cases due to inauspicious circumstances and other difficulties, he or members of his entourage were harmed in the process of revealing the Treasures. The circumstances related in the above episodes are similar to those related by other Tertons, right up to modern times.

Terton Pemalingpa's autobiography was written down at the end of his life, and though very precise on names, places and events, the exact chronology of the Terma finds is sometimes unclear. Most were discovered when he was in his late twenties and thirties.

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35 This is not the famous Tharpaling monastery in the Chumé valley, seat of Longchen Rabjam. Pemalingpa found a series of perhaps nine or ten Termas in an area stretching to several days' walk south of Bumthang. The Tharpaling referred to here, near the Vajra Rock, is more than a day's walk from Jakar, whilst the nearest spot is at Chenrezigthang, a lonely pasture above a ravine a few hours southeast of Chumé.

CHAPTER 4: POWER AND INTUITION

MIRACULOUS POWERS

Saints like Pemalingpa are recorded as manifesting magical powers over the material world, for the benefit of sentient beings. These manifestations often seem to occur spontaneously, without apparent deliberate action on the part of the saint.

Thus, once Pemalingpa was invited by Phajo Sherab to Chiphu in Tibet to give initiation rites to the public. On this occasion, wishing for a show of magic power, Phajo asked him to consecrate a stone pestle which was to be used in making medicinal powders. Pemalingpa felt uneasy, knowing that if he did not respond to this, people would lose faith in him. As he stood wondering what to do, holding the pestle, a trance came over him, and it was found that the stone pestle had been imprinted with the mark of his hand. Faith in him was thereby strengthened, and the people present there became his disciples too.

He left imprints in stone on several occasions. One was during his childhood at Chel Baridrang, when he is said to have stamped angrily on a rock upon being teased, leaving several small footprints. The best known is the footprint he made on a stone which is kept at the monastery of Kunzangdrak.

One of his favourite places for retreat was a small hermitage which he had built in the Bumthang valley. Once when he was staying there, the Lama Chabshé asked him to come to Shong near Bumthang to give the Long Life Initiation. During the ceremonies there, miraculous things occurred too. The grain in the offering-vase turned green during the initial preparations; at the end of the Refuge prayers it began to sprout, and by the time the ceremony was half way through, the shoots had grown above the neck of the vase. By the end of the Invocation to the Gods it had produced grain pods, and when the Initiation stage was reached the grain ripened; and by the completion of the ceremony it was ready to be eaten.

WISDOM WITHOUT LEARNING

Let us consider the saying that Pemalingpa acquired great learning and wisdom apparently without effort or studies. In Buddhism, this phenomenon is well established, and it is explained in relation to the doctrine of Reincarnation and the law of Karma.

Sakya Pandita said: "If one studies or works hard for one's own name and fame in this life, it is useless; but if one does so for the benefit of all in one's future lives, then riches both spiritual and temporal will come easily in one's next existence".

It is our belief that Pemalingpa was the sage Drimé Wozer in his previous life, one who had studied and meditated for many years and finally achieved the greatness of the omniscient Siddhas. All-knowing Jigmé Lingpa composed the following lines of praise to Drimé Wozer: "Of the Six Ornaments and Two most excellent Jewels in Creation, Drimé Wozer possesses full knowledge, even though he does not boast to others that he is their equal".

So Sakya Pandita says that if we dedicate what we do for the sake of our next lives, we shall in future acquire knowledge easily. Pemalingpa, having already achieved the very highest insight in his previous lives, in particular the understanding of Ultimate Phenomena, was thus able to manifest great knowledge and insight almost effortlessly.

Again, Sakya Pandita says: "When a being, through great efforts, no longer is enticed in the web of cause and effect, then Omniscience is achieved. If it were possible to achieve Omniscience without great effort, then indeed our whole doctrine would fall"[36].

Pemalingpa was by all accounts a simple and fairly rough character, until the time was ripe for his mission of helping others. A similar pattern is recorded in the lives of other saints, such as Marpa Lotsava, Drug-gom Zhigpo and Tsering Dorjé. So we say of those who emanate from the divine palace of Padmasambhava, that their extraordinary lives are beyond normal interpretations. Thus it is that in the traditions of Buddhism, great saints as well as Tertons have occasionally been unlearned people.

LIQUOR WITHOUT DRUNKENNESS

There was an occasion when Pemalingpa visited Kurélung in northeast Bhutan with some of his disciples, and was offered in the course of the evening a large copper bowl of liquor by his host. Pemalingpa began to drink very rapidly, and even to wrest the bowl away from others.

The host was very pleased to see the saint enjoying his hospitality so well, for it is the custom even today to give a guest as much to drink as he pleases: so he went out to his neighbours' houses to obtain more drink. But even though he did this several times, Pemalingpa consumed all the man could provide, until finally he could not procure any more liquor in the village. Pemalingpa drank constantly, and kept asking to be replenished with more. It was the first and only time someone had been seen to consume so much.

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36 Sakya Pandita, Kunga Gyaltshen (1181-1251), quoted from his *Legs par bshad pa*. It is said of Sakya Pandita that he, from his former lives, knew Sanskrit instinctively; see Dawa Norbu, *Red Star* p.63.

Finally, the host simply had to say that there was no more to be found. Upon this Pemalingpa said that it was regrettable, for if there were no more then the fortune of the village would not be as good as it could have been.

Now a similar story is told of the Indian Siddha Birvapa in olden times, and it shows how the behaviour of saints cannot always be seen like that of ordinary mortals. It seems as if Pemalingpa was drinking an enormous amount of alcohol; our interpretation of such strange phenomena, however, is that there are several levels of Reality to which saints have access, and that the saint was not drinking the alcohol in the normal sense: he did not get intoxicated, nor did he need to pass water. He was also on this occasion in a kind of a trance state; and as we interpret it, the reason for his saying that the peoples' fortune would not be so good, was that he was carrying out an offering to the Gods. His presence there and his consumption of alcohol in the midst of a devout group had a ritual and symbolic function.

Alcohol has always had a ritual function in our society, with the first drops always offered to the protector deities. In this case, the Terton involved the whole community, not just his host, in the ritual. He had completed the offering to the Gods of the phenomenal worlds, but was for lack of wine unable to complete the last offering, which should be for the four Wrathful Goddesses. This is why he urged the host for more. What to outsiders may appear as crude and licentious behavior may, in the case of holy men, be an appearance only, which conceals a greater, and pure, inner function: one which goes beyond the domain of the physical body and senses. A miracle is involved. The fact that a person is not affected physically on such occasions, is one indication of the special nature of the process that is occurring. In the case of simple drunkennness, the results would be seen clearly.

INTUITIVE RECOLLECTION OF FORMER LIVES

When Pemalingpa visited the main monastery of the thirteenth century master Drimé Wozer, at Shar Kunzangling near Wangdiphodrang in Bhutan[37] , he met Drimé Wozer's six disciples: Chophel, Dakwang, Dakpa Wozer, Gyatso, Atra and Palden Wozer. But these showed no particular respect for him on his arrival, and did not request his blessing; though they served him with care. In fact they were in a state of great agitation as to whether this was really, as had been rumoured, the reincarnation of their departed lama.

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37 In Bhutan there are eight 'Ling' monasteries especially 'belonging to' Longchen and hence also to Pemalingpa: they are Babron Tharpaling, Shingkhar Dechenling, Ugyencholing in Tang, Kunzangling in Kurto, Nyenlong Drechagling, Kothang Pemaling (or Rinchenling), Menlok Kunzangling near Wangdi and Paro Samtenling.

Pemalingpa and his disciples spent the night in the prayer hall. At daybreak, they called Pemalingpa's attendant Rinzang and said to him: "It is said that this Pemalingpa is the reincarnation of our All-Knowing Drimé Wozer, but we are in doubt, that is why we did not do obeisance to him. Please tell him that if he is really our lama returned, he should demonstrate to us knowledge of his former life, so that we may believe in him". So Rinzang returned to Pemalingpa and related this. The Terton was upset and said: "I am not a dog, to be fed or beaten as his owner pleases! Now we shall go home." But Rinzang said, "If we do so, they will have shamed us. Rather you should recollect your previous life and say something". So Pemalingpa said that the monks should be called to him. When they arrived, he pointed from the door of the monastery and said, "My house used to be over there; you have demolished it. This monastery was not built by me, but was founded by Tokden Gonzang; now let us go around to the back and I shall show you where my ceremonial throne used to be, next to that cypress tree; but now I see you have shifted it over there, who moved it? Down there, below the monastery, there was an area paved with flat stones used for the *Lama Thang Yig* initiation and *Nigu* ceremony: is it still visible?"

Then overcome with emotion, Lama Chophel bowed to take up the hem of Pemalingpa's robe and cried out: "Now indeed my Root Lama has returned!" And he continued: "Now we are all so fortunate to have our lama back, you must give us teachings". They told him that the throne by the cypress had been moved by Lama Kathog, and his house demolished by Lama Drakwang to make more room for the monastery. Pemalingpa said that he did not wish to use the throne on this occasion, but rather wished to gather the people in the large field above the monastery. Then again, he grew thoughtful and asked: "On the other side of that hill over there, there used to be a small lake. On the path to Vachenteuché I used to meditate in a small cottage, to get water I had found a spring in that small grove of trees, because the bigger lake was too far, have you seen that spring?" But they said they had never seen it. So led by Lama Zhangchap a group of young men went over in the direction of the trees, and soon came back, shouting that they had found both the spring and the ruins of the cottage. Lama Wangdak grasped the Terton's hand, exclaiming, "See, indeed you are more familiar with this place than we ourselves!"

Extraordinary though it may seem, it has been demonstrated over and over, through the centuries, that those who are free of the illusions and passions of this world, acquire intuitive knowledge and recollection of former lives.

Then the monks built a new throne for the saint, roofed with bamboo, and he expounded the teachings of *Gongpa Kundu* for twenty-three days. On the final day the crowd was huge, and Pemalingpa sat on the great throne beside the ritual cake. All the initiates passed beneath the frame holding the ritual cake. For the initiation thanks, twelve horses and many other offerings were made to Pemalingpa.

SHARDONGKHA

At one time, the young king of Shardongkha in lower Mon came to him requesting his protection. The line of Shardongkha kings had been afflicted for twenty-five generations by the curse of evil demons, for whom they had to make annual sacrifices of many animals and also of one human victim. So the young king begged Pemalingpa to save him and his line from the evil and sinful consequences of this curse. Pemalingpa conducted rituals and declared finally that the curse was dispelled, and that the king would live for many more years. The king also conceived a son thereafter.

PROPHECY AND INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE

When Pemalingpa was forty-nine years old, his patron the Nangso of Lhodrak requested him for a prophecy about the future of the Dharma, and for instructions as to what ceremonies to perform in order to protect the people against any coming evils. Pemalingpa replied: "Go to Dingwa Pesar near by Lhodrak; when I was a child, there was a miracle-stone inside a small wayside shrine. No one knows about it now. You will find it there on the ground, with eleven lines of writing cut into it. Bring this stone to the ruins of the Kyeru-chu Monastery which was established in former times by King Songtsen Gampo. You must rebuild it, and in the shrine hall you must set up a statue of the Buddha Vairocana having four faces. He should be flanked by images of the Eight Spiritual Sons of Buddha. Consecrate the monastery and the images, and let the stone from Pesar be placed in the right hand of the main statue. If you do this, in Lhodrak the Dharma will not be disturbed. And for eighteen years, the harvests will be exceptionally bountiful."

The Nangso said: "I know that opposite Cher there are several ruins visible; but please come with us to show us which are the ruins of Kyeruchu." So the next day, led by Zimpon Mindo, attendant of the chieftain, they proceeded to the spot, where Pemalingpa indicated to them the ruins of the monastery. He then circumambulated the site, and rainbows shone from all four directions like shafts of colour coming forth from the earth: and a rain of flowers was experienced by all those present. Pemalingpa, due to his power, saw that the ruins were surrounded by ghosts. The Nangso asked him how the monastery used to be. Pemalingpa replied that the spot where one painting was still visible on a wall of the ruin, should be chosen for the new temple. Then the Nangso said he would commence the construction the same year, and that Pemalingpa should come the following year to consecrate it.

The year after, as requested by the Nangso, Terton Pemalingpa travelled to Lhalung to consecrate the temple. At the time of consecration of the restored monastery he transcribed the Terma text *Lungten Kunsel Melong*; in a trance he wrote out a total of

fifty-seven pages in one morning. This was done in the presence of Dondrup Paljor for the Nangso. All were astonished at the speed of the Terton.

The auspicious hour for the consecration ceremony was determined as being at the exact hour of the sunrise. This Pemalingpa declared to be a very good omen, and he said that the monastery should therefore be called Tashi Tengyé. There were great celebrations and, as prophesied by the saint, the Lhodrak valley enjoyed many years of peace and prosperity.

Pemalingpa's knowledge of the stone with the eleven lines of script, as well as of the ruins, in an area previously unknown to him, is another example of his intuitive insight; and so too the miraculous signs seen at the time confirmed his divine nature as a Treasure revealer.

THE KHENPALUNG TERMA

Once when Pemalingpa was in Tashigang in Kurtoe he had another Dakini dream in which he was told to go to Khenpalung to reveal a Terma. He asked for the location, and the Dakinis gave him detailed instructions.

On the next day, Pemalingpa went to Khenpalung, which is a secret valley or *beyul*, and in accordance with the Dakini's instructions discovered the Terma called *Gongpa Lamé*, the address of which had been indicated to him in the scroll of a previous find at Tang Rimochen.

However, on returning to the village of Emja with the Terma, the local people confronted him, saying that he had no right to remove a Treasure which belonged to them. Pemalingpa's attendant Tangrungchupa had to defend him in the ensuing fracas, which ended with the local ringleader being arrested by Pemalingpa's supporters. The Terton then manifested his miraculous powers, even over the elements of nature, by bringing down a heavy hailstorm on the village which lasted for three days and nights, destroying most of their crops. Then he sent a message to them, saying: "I did not come here to steal your wealth, but according to the intention and prophecy of Guru Rinpoche."

Finally the quarrel was settled and the prisoner released. The Emja folk were convinced by Pemalingpa's power, and became his disciples. They donated some fields to him, and continued to be patrons of the Terton thereafter.

This kind of anger on Pemalingpa's part should not be misunderstood: it is not normal anger, it is what we call 'higher' or 'divine' anger. It is enlightened behaviour intended to induce faith; and as such it is a manifestation of Compassion[38].

THE POISONER

The following incident from later in the saint's life shows another of the many ways in which this Compassion can manifest itself. On a visit to Kurélung, Pemalingpa had a premonition that someone there intended to poison him. So he told his disciples to be sure not to let anyone slip into his room. However the poisoner did manage to enter, while Pemalingpa's followers' attention was diverted by the festivities going on. The man came with a cup of wine as an offering to the saint. Since such offerings are not to be refused, Pemalingpa took a draught of the poisoned cup, and offered the rest back to his poisoner who, however, rudely refused it and poured out the contents on the ground.

The poison made Pemalingpa critically ill for forty days. His attendants could do nothing to cure him, and for a long time he was unable to eat or to drink. At this time, the five kinds of rainbow shone overhead, there was a rain of flowers, and the sound of cymbals was heard from the sky. These portents were seen by all. Pemalingpa himself had a vision of many girls wearing bone ornaments, ringing the ritual bell and twirling the *damaru* hand-drums. Then many young men also appeared before him, dressed with the bone ornaments and tiger skins, bearing incense and cymbals: all signs of approaching death. Two girls danced, and a white horse appeared outside the door, fully saddled. He saw a young monk, carrying a horse-whip, approaching to take him away. But then Guru Rinpoche too appeared in the vision, saying to them: "Why do you come to summon him now? He has yet many Treasures to reveal, and his destiny is far from completed. So, you, go away! And now you too, Pemalingpa, enough of this lying around, go and spread the Teachings again". Upon this, all the visions disappeared.

Then suddenly Pemalingpa returned to consciousness, full of vigour, saying: "Now I shall go!" His disciples tried to restrain him, but could not. He was fully recovered and ate a large meal. Thus Guru Rinpoche had intervened to save him.

After this, his followers went to apprehend the culprit, but Pemalingpa refused to let them punish him, saying: "If you want to kill him, you will have to take my life first." So the culprit, who was the Lama Namgyal, was also spared by Pemalingpa.

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38 Divine Anger, *rang bzhin gyi khro bo*, or *chos nyid kyi khro bo*, the meaning of these phrases being literally 'natural', 'spontaneous' or 'higher' anger.

MILAREPA

Miraculous powers are manifested only at times of particular need or when there is a particular purpose. The following example, illustrating this, is taken from the life of the great Yogin Jetsun Milarepa.

On a journey from Palthang with his disciple Rechung Dorjé Drakpa, Milarepa saw a yak horn lying on the ground and said to his disciple: "Take it, we might need it". Rechung brushed off this apparently pointless suggestion, so Milarepa picked it up himself. Some time later, as they were traversing a barren plain completely devoid of shelter, it became very dark and began to hail heavily. Rechungpa, trying vainly to protect his head with his robe, heard his master singing somewhere, but he was not to be seen. Seeing only the yak horn lying on the ground, he tried to move it but could not and then, looking warily at it, to his amazement he saw that Milarepa was inside. But neither had the Yogi become smaller, nor the horn any bigger. Milarepa was seen by his disciple as an image, reflected in a mirror, and he then sang this song to his disciple:

When the Lama's blessing enters the Body,
No longer is it an ordinary vessel, Rechungpa,
But the very vehicle of miracles:
So you must do your devotions.

When the Lama's grace has entered the Speech,
Then it is no longer the whistle of empty words
But the holiest truths and treasure that are heard:
Rechungpa, be mindful of the Inner meanings.

When the Lama's blessing enters the Mind
Then all the veils of seeming are dispelled;
This is the door to All-Clear Insight, Rechungpa;
Practise fervently !

Your ideas, my son, are as a vulture,
Flying now too high and now too low:
Consider, between these two, the middle air;
Do not hurry, and abandon useless clothes.
If the son would be as the father, then come, Rechungpa,
Into the spacious shelter of this horn.

Your meditation my son, is the way of the sun and moon
At times shining, at times quite dark.
Consider well, the middle between light and darkness;
Do not strive, and avoid useless clothes.
If the son would be as the father, then come,
Rechungpa, into this pleasant horn.

Your character my son, is as the wind,
Sometimes feeble and sometimes raging strong;
Aim not for these but for what is between:
Do not strive, and cast off useless clothes.
If the son would be equal to the father, then come
Into the shelter of this spacious Yak's horn.

Within a horn shelter can be found:
The fruit of your strivings are like a farmer's crops,
Sometimes good, sometimes bad. But
That which is neither good nor bad - think of this,
Rechungpa; relax, and avoid false clothes.
If the son is the father's equal, then come in.

When something happens,
Whatever we happen to find will do;
This horn is fine and spacious, my son:
I, your father, call; now, come inside,
It would be absurd not to do as I.

I am an old man, I never went to India,
A small rough shelter is all I deserve;
But you my son are young, and have travelled the world,
You have learned from scholars and Siddhas,
You are of great stature. So look around
For a room that is fit for one like you.
But should you find none, this one has no owner -
So, Rechungpa, come inside!

Rechungpa of course then tried to go into the horn, but could not get even his head and hand inside[39].

39 From Milarepa's biography by Tsangnyon Heruka.

This kind of miraculous manifestation has been witnessed in the lives of many great Yogins; and in Pemalingpa's life, there occurred a similar incident. It was when he was about forty, and the people of Lhodrak had invited him again. At this time, he had a dream in which the Genyen Kulakangri[40] appeared. He was an old man, finely dressed. He said to Pemalingpa, "Now the time has come for you to extract the treasure-chest of turquoise from the rock at Lhalung: it must be done tomorrow".

The next day he set out, accompanied by five others: the Nangso, Thrapaponpo Donlek, Chusultokden, Zablung Tulku and Tokdenkunrin. With a large group of people following, they took the path up to Monkhar mountain, arriving at the Rock around midday.

Under the rock there was a small opening, the size of a cat. The Terton made the offerings of ritual cakes to the Terma's protector deity and, visualising the Guru on the crown of his forehead, prayed: "May I now be authorised to reveal the Treasure of the Guru!"

The Terton, carrying a chisel and a hammer-stone, advanced to the rock and was then seen to enter the small hole. The people outside heard from within the sound of three blows as Pemalingpa struck the protuberance on the cave wall, indicating the concealed Terma, with his chisel. The aperture to the Treasure crumbled away and, reaching inside with his hand, Pemalingpa found the holy Amulet which was engraved with the six seals: on top the Wheel, underneath the seal of Padma, on the front the Vajra seal, on the right side the Jewel seal, on the back the seal of Padma again, on the left the Crossed Thunderbolts. Taking this out, he replaced it with the 'Treasure Substitutes': the Five kinds of Grain and the Five Medicines[41]. Then he closed the aperture again with shards of stone, and crawled out of the hole, warning the others not to attempt to enter it.

But three of his followers, Tokden, Zablung Tulku and the Nangso, could not repress their curiosity and, despite his warning, put their heads inside the hole. As in the story of Rechungpa, however, they were quite unable to enter any further. They could not avert the punishment of the site's guardian spirits. Tokden contracted leprosy soon

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40 Genyen Kulakangri (7500m), the spirit of the highest mountain in Bhutan, on the Tibetan border. *Genyen*, as opposed to the term *gelong*, is also a title for non-ordained lamas of the Nyingma type.

41 The Five Substitutes: the grains (*'bru lnga)* are: *sran ma*, *gro*, *til*, *nas*, *'bras,* respectively peas, wheat, sesamum, barley and rice. The Five Medicines (*sman lnga*) are: *sle tres*, *kanda ka ri*, *dbang lag*, *rgya mtsho'i lbu ba*, *shu dag dkar po* . The first three are respectively Tinospora Cardifolia, Solanum Xanthocarpum and Dactylorhiza Hatagirea. Drs.Paolo Morisco and Reno Seth at the Institute for Indigenous Medicine in Thimphu inform me that the fourth is some kind of crustacean, and that *shu dag dkar po* is known but specimens have not yet been identified botanically (*shu dag nag po*, which may be a related 'black' variety, is Acros Calamos).

afterwards, Zablung Tulku scales on his eyes, and Nangso a festering abscess. Chusultokden was fortunate, in that he too had wished to do as they had, but had been unable to get even his head inside. The first three proved to be incurable: but they believed ever more firmly in Pemalingpa, and said that they could not regret their misfortune, which was deserved retribution for their foolishness.

Pemalingpa's successful recovery of this Treasure, from within a small hole, watched by a large number of people, became one of his most renowned exploits. The miraculous power to transcend the usual confines of physical phenomena was manifested by him on several occasions, just as it was by others like the great Jetsun Milarepa. Their feats give an example which their disciples, of less strong faith, seek to but cannot emulate, or at least not to the same degree, without many more years of dedicated spiritual practice.

གཏེར་སྟོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་གསུམ་པ་རྡོ་རྗེ་གླིང་པ།

C. The third Sovereign Terton,
Dorjé Lingpa

གཏེར་སྟོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལྔ་པ་མདོ་སྡེ་གས་གླིང་པ།

D. The fifth Sovereign Terton,
Dongak Lingpa

CHAPTER 5: GREAT WITNESSES

When Pemalingpa became famous all over Bhutan and Tibet, there was a lama named Namkha, from the Shang district of Tibet, who slandered and insulted him far and wide, spreading rumours that he was a deceiver. He was not the only one; as we have seen Pemalingpa often had to face sceptical or downright hostile audiences. But it is not easy to fool people again and again. Again and again, those who doubted Pemalingpa were convinced. This is not only the assertion of his close biographers: it is confirmed by other contemporary writers as well as later figures of great stature.

Many saints and scholars have praised Pemalingpa as being one of the very great Tertons. These saints and scholars are of the highest intellectual stature and spiritual integrity. Pemalingpa could never have achieved, and maintained, such renown if his writings had been shallow or his life false.

There are three kinds of pain in the world: the pain of suffering; the misery of change; and the misery of consciousness[42]. Saints such as the Tertons are free of these. But who is able to recognise this if they do not know even their own failings? Even some lamas saw Pemalingpa as a deceiver, but it is those people's own demerits which distort their vision. A proverb of Buddhism says that precious white shells may be perceived as yellow by a person with jaundice.

A good merchant recognises things of value, and, moreover, uses them for the benefit of all; but an ignorant or unlucky person seldom finds such things, or even seeing them may not recognise their great value. Those who are able to recognise great gems of the spirit, similarly, know that they cannot be sullied nor cause evil: they will always aid us. It is in vain to try to find faults in them. Even in so doing, good will result.

KARMAPA CHODRAK GYATSHO

During Pemalingpa's lifetime, the most powerful spiritual leader in all Tibet was the hierarch of the Karma Kagyu school, the Seventh Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho (1454-1506). Like the Dalai Lamas, the Karmapas are known as emanations of Avalokiteshvara. In 1503, he sent messengers to Pemalingpa in Tamzhing, where the Terton was building his new monastery, inviting him to his seat at Rinpung Dzong. In his message, he gave several remarkable specific instructions, such as that the paintings they were busy with on the left wall of the temple should be completed as soon as possible, so that Pemalingpa could come to visit him, since the two of them had had previous karmic connections in three lives. The Karmapa's supernatural knowledge of this and other things at Tamzhing was a source of amazement.

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42 The three kinds of Suffering are: the pain of sufferings, the pain of change, and the pain of consciousness (*sdug bsngal gi sdug bsngal*, *'gyur ba'i sdug bsngal* and *khyab pa 'du byed kyi sdug bsngal*).

So Pemalingpa travelled to Rinpung. Showing his clear insight again, the Karmapa then asked Pemalingpa to show him the yellow Terma scrolls, treasure pills and prophecies which Pemalingpa had brought with him. Pemalingpa replied: "The secret prophecies have not been shown to anyone yet, for although some people rejoice, others are very jealous." Then Karmapa replied: "It is the nature of human beings to have different points of view."

Pemalingpa explained his own views to Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho, telling him also that he had critics who called him a fraud and an evil emanation. He said to the Karmapa: "Some say I am a deceiver, but I myself believe I am Guru Rinpoche's chosen messenger. You, my Lord, who know all things that have been, are, and are to be[43], and who are truly Buddha, can answer as to the truth in this question." But Karmapa said nothing.

Now, we may ask why the Karmapa remained silent. If we understand the reason of his silence, it can help us to form our judgement about Pemalingpa; but if we misunderstand this, our judgement will have no serious basis.

Generally, Buddhist philosophy classifies Comprehension as twofold: there is Direct Comprehension and there is Indirect Comprehension. It is the notion of Indirect Comprehension which is most often misunderstood.

To give an analogy: when one does virtuous acts, merit results, whilst from sinful acts vice and demerit accumulate. One who takes refuge in the Triple Gem, giving to the poor, thinking kind thoughts, refraining from the sins such as violence, theft and so on, accumulates merit in two ways: that is, both visible (outer) and invisible (inner). This is according to the karmic law of cause and effect. The visible result may be good fortune, worldly success and happiness, or it may not be; that depends on other karmic factors as well as on the perceptions of those involved. The inner merit, however, is unequivocal and quite certain.

Similarly, then, Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho gave no direct answer to Pemalingpa. But he had invited Pemalingpa, sending his personal messengers to far-off Bumthang, and this itself is clear indication of his sincerity: further, he then requested from Pemalingpa not merely one initiation but the whole series of the Terton's teachings. Thus it is shown that he recognised and valued Pemalingpa as one of the Great Tertons. There is no doubt about this. He had already answered Pemalingpa's question; further answer on the direct level of speech was unnecessary.

Appearances do not always provide easy interpretation. We must take the very greatest care both to understand the fundamental difference between Direct and Indirect Comprehension, and then to scrutinise in each case the rough meaning and the ultimate meaning of the phenomenon we are studying, be it of Body, Speech or Mind.

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43 Dusum Khenpo: Lord of Threefold Time, (past, present and future). This honorific is also used by Ngawang Drakpa in chapter 5.

Lama Tulkuwa was the messenger sent by the Karmapa to Tamzhing in order to request all Pemalingpa's Termas. He then related his voyage, and told the Karmapa that all had indeed been brought: *Gongpa Kundu, Longsel Dronmé, Lama Drakpo, Lama Norbu Gyatsho, Lungten Kunsel Melong* and *Gurbum*. All were offered to Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho.

Later, while they were drinking tea together, Terton Pemalingpa made further offerings to the Karmapa: the Seven Dharma Medicine Pills, and the precious Secret Fluids of the Guru and of Yeshé Tshogyal.

A few days later on the fifteenth of the Monkey month, the Karmapa requested Pemalingpa to visit him in the evening. They then conversed alone in the Karmapa's tent while Lama Tulkuwa waited outside. The Karmapa asked the Terton to sit on a carpet to his left, and then requested him for initiations. Pemalingpa said that surely in the presence of the master Shakyamuni, the mere disciple Ananda should hardly give teachings. But the Karmapa urged him to impart the Terma teachings, and so Pemalingpa expounded one of the texts. The Karmapa then insisted on receiving empowerment for the whole lineage of the Termas. The Karmapa said to him afterwards: "Here I have not been able to accommodate you with any generosity; but soon we can go to Lhasa and on the way have deeper discussions". Pemalingpa, however, declined the trip to Lhasa, saying he was in a hurry to return to Monyul Bumthang for the completion of his monastery. Then it was agreed that Pemalingpa should depart after two more days. The Karmapa gave him a piece of silk embroidered with the image of a parrot, and many other parting gifts: a golden statue of Maitreya, silk, a horse, and so on.

The Karmapa is revered as an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, whose nature is Compassion. He had on his body the many signs of Buddhahood: on his neck the image of Vajradhara, over his heart the letter "A", under his feet and at the sexual organs the mark of the chakras. On issuing from his mother's womb, he had smiled and pronounced the words, "A La La"; even his urine was said to be as sweet as milk. From his former lives, he was already omniscient, free of the delusions and obscurations of ordinary minds.

He passed away at the age of fifty-three, and at his cremation many relics of the five different colours were found in the ashes. It is recorded that his spinal column remained straight up to the neck and was not consumed by the fire: on each vertebra an eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara was seen, and so too the rib bones had formed into the hands of the clear-eyed Deity of Compassion. Seen as a whole, his bones had formed into a likeness of the Avalokiteshvara with one thousand hands and eyes.

The Seventh Karmapa was recognised as having powers virtually unsurpassed amongst all of the Siddhas of Bhutan, Tibet and India. He was clearly convinced of Pemalingpa's greatness as a Terton, and thus invited him to Tsangrong Rinpung to request his initiations. How should we, with our meagre spiritual understanding, doubt the superlative wisdom and insight of such figures?

THE NYEL CHIEFTAIN

On the strong recommendation of the Karmapa, the chieftain of Nyel, Thripon Tashi Dargyé[44], also sent messengers inviting Pemalingpa from Bumthang. The messengers were the nun Ani Kunzang accompanied by Hordalugpo and another man called Dargyé. Then the Terton together with about sixty disciples travelled to Phodrang Chogyal Lhunpo, a long journey through Kurélung and over the mountains. On the saint's arrival, Tashi Dargyé presented him with the five varieties of serge-silk, and a decorated table inlaid with jewels and diamonds. He himself sat on a simple mat before Pemalingpa, and said to him: "In the prophecy of Raga Tulku, it is said that three emanations will appear in Nyel. I consulted the omniscient one, Karmapa, regarding this; he told me to invite you here, saying that he and you had been connected in former lives. Now I am so happy that you were able to come. Please, tomorrow bestow on me the initiation of *Lama Drakpo*."

Pemalingpa did this as requested, and added the initiations of *Drakpo Yangsang Lamé*. Tashi Dargyé wished him to stay for a long period of several months, but Pemalingpa's disciples were anxious to return, and thus they stayed a short while only. As prophesied by Guru Rinpoche, and due to his excellent karmic background, Tashi Dargyé became one of Pemalingpa's main patrons, sending him gifts every year thereafter. The prophecy about this, to be found in the *Lungten Kunsel Melong*, is as follows:

> The translator of this work, Pal Yeshé,
> Will appear in Nyel in the kingly line,
> Called Tashi, of courage true,
> He will serve the Tulku Pemalingpa and practise *Lama Drakpo*.
> Extending his rule throughout the land,
> No hindrance befalling, by the age of fifty-three
> If he practises *Lama Drakpo*
> All of Ngari, U-Tsang, Kongpo and Drakpo will be his,
> And he will attain
> The Divine Palace of the Guru.

At the time of their meeting, another incident occurred, concerning Tashi Dargyé's son, who was a very small boy at the time. The child came up to the Terton and said to him: "Thank you for coming here for the welfare of all sentient beings: I too lived for the benefit of sentient beings in my last life." The astonished father asked, "What do you mean, what did you do in your last life?". Then the child said: "I was the emanation of Gyalwang Kunga Paljor"[45]. The father said: "I don't think I believe this". The child

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44 *Thripon*, a very important title. *Chupon* means head of 10 families or households, *Japon* of 100 families, *Tongpon* of 1000 and *Thripon* of 10000, e.g. a regional chief or myriarch.

45 This boy was a very significant person. His name is Jamyang Chojé Drakpa, and the predecessor he names, Gyalwa Kunga Paljor, was in turn the reincarnation of the founder of the Drukpa Kagyu school, Tsangpa Jaré (there was a gap of seven generations between them), who founded the Ralung Druk Selshing monastery. The two ensuing contenders in

answered: "Wait and see! Wait until next year, when the *chogbupa* nomads come around again, for they used to be my disciples, and will recognise me". Then the father said to Pemalingpa: "Now lord Pemalingpa, you have come here and my son has recalled his former births. Indeed this is auspicious and I am so fortuned!".

On the return journey, Pemalingpa and his followers travelled by way of Tshona, Zangyagdrak and Domtshang, and reached the seat of the lama Namkha Gyalpo. The lama told them: "Horses cannot go through the Lochung Drakri, for the defile on the pass is too narrow". But Pemalingpa shrugged off the lama's warning, and continued to the top of the pass. There he and his horse passed through miraculously. A hoofprint in the rock is still visible there. His amazed disciples prostrated themselves towards the horse; they, however, even on foot were unable to pass and had to scale the rocks with ropes and ladders.

DRUKPA KUNLÉ

One of the most famous and revered figures in the religious history and folklore of Bhutan is Drukpa Kunlé, a contemporary and a disciple of Pemalingpa. This great Siddha is also renowned throughout Tibet. He was a spiritual master of the rather special type known sometimes as Divine Madmen. The words and actions of such people are often shocking, insulting or obscene; this is recognised as a deliberate method of provoking people to discard their preconceptions: their message is that, in the final analysis, good and evil, beauty and ugliness are devoid of inherent meaning and one should not be attached to either.

According to Pemalingpa's autobiography, the two first met on an occasion in the village of Rogo in Tibet where Pemalingpa was giving teachings. Upon arriving, Drukpa Kunlé offered the Terton a rough piece of iron, saying: "In return for this, give me the Magic Dagger initiation." But at first Pemalingpa refused. The following record of this first encounter is found in the autobiography known as *The Biographical Garland*[46] by Droshul Drodul Lethro Lingpa, a great contemporary lama: "The so-called Siddha Drukpa Kunlé arrived, and made prostrations before Pemalingpa, requesting the initiation." On folio 187 Lethro Lingpa records that Drukpa Kunlé spoke the following verses:

Obeisance to the Guru,
Great Terton possessed of Compassion:
Those who follow your ocean of true Dharma
Have faith and keep their vows.
Thus I, mad Drukpa Kunlé, am fortunate too
To approach you on such a great day;
Venerating above all the lineage of the Vajra,

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this line were Paksam Wangpo, and the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who migrated south and unified Bhutan under Drukpa hegemony (see also note 110).

46 Quoted from the *Rnam thar me tog phreng mdzes*. There are several Lethro Lingpas, this one being Droshul Drodul Lethro Lingpa.

Which is the very essence of the Dharma.
For the teachings you will give me
I offer this mandala to you:
Om Ah Hum,
Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya!
In the mandala of the chakra-wheel at the crown
I present the Root Lama's lineage.
In the mandala of the repository in the neck
I place the Root Mantra as Ali and Kali.
In the Mandala of the Channel Wheel at the heart,
I place the Wrathful and the Peaceful Deities.
In the Mandala of the Navel's Channel I place
The ocean of Heroes and Dakinis;
In the Mandala of the Chakra at the sexual organs
The protector Deities.
My own body, now transformed
Into the Mandala of Emanation, I offer to you,
Great Terton: and from you I beseech
The Teachings of the Great Completion[47].

Pemalingpa, relates Lethro Lingpa, responded in verse form as follows:
Guru Sarwa Siddhi Hum!
Emanation of Tamdrin, great Kunga Legpa[48],
Now listen to my words!
I have had no time to practice as I should,
I, Peling, cannot tell the religion of the Gods.
The spontaneous voidness of all things is hard to grasp;
In the world seen as it really is, nothing happens,
For within the primordial emptiness of Mind,
All is already constituted and accomplished.
Dharma is gathering the great sphere of Void;
The Great Vehicle extends in the disciples.
As in the star-filled sky there are Yanas innumerable, The Great Emptiness of Ati alone is immovable.

Again, in folio 203 of Lethro Lingpa's biography it is recorded that Drukpa Kunlé met him again at Tsethang, and addressed them on this occasion thus: "It is excellent

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47 This refers to Atiyoga, Dzogchen, considered by the Nyingmapas to be the highest category of Tantric practice; it is exclusively found in the Nyingma teachings, though not exclusively practised by them. The first ten volumes of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* are Dzogchen texts, though there are many others besides. See for example Karmay in: *Soundings*, op.cit. p.272.

48 Tamdrin is a principal Yidam or 'archetype' deity of the Nyingmapas; the horse-headed deity, the wrathful aspect of Chenrezig: usually depicted with three faces, six arms, four legs and four wings, standing in union with a consort. Tibetan and Bhutanes names are very often abbreviated, thus Kunlé is short for Kunga Legpa: similarly Pemalingpa is shortened to Peling.

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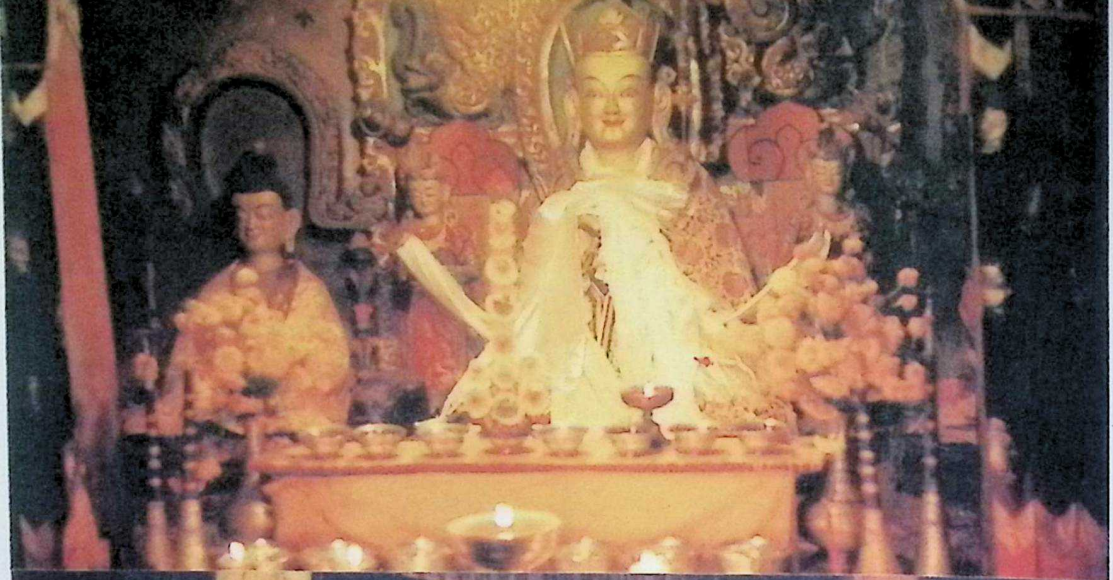

that you, Terton Lethro Lingpa should be here on this day, since I wish to receive your Blessing. Let us mark this auspicious event, and I shall serve you tea and wine." This he did, reminding him how they had met and had held long talks previously. Then he spoke the following verse:

I, the madman from Kyishodruk,
Wander around from place to place;
I believe in lamas when it suits me,
I practice the Dharma in my own way.
I choose any qualities, they are all illusions,
Any gods, they are all the Emptiness of the Mind.
I use fair and foul words for Mantras, it's all the same,
My meditation practice is girls and wine;
I do whatever I feel like, strolling around in the Void.
Last time, I saw you with the the Bumthang Tulku;
With my great karmic background, I could approach.
Indeed it was auspicious, to meet you on my pilgrim's round!

Thus the Divine Madman Drukpa Kunlé, despite his habitual provocative irreverence, was a confirmed disciple of Pemalingpa.

Lord Drukpa Kunlé is said to have achieved mastery of Blissful Mind: at all times unaffected by phenomena, letting appearances and events occur. Since it was in his nature to be provocative, insulting or even crude, this too he did. But no-one should be misled by these appearances and doubt his divine nature; we must grasp the essence of his words, and see how contemporaries as well as later saints held him in the deepest respect. In his own autobiography[49] he recalls how he directed provocative insults not only at Terton Pemalingpa, but at many other great figures such as the Karmapa, Milarepa, Marpa Lotsava and Sakya Pandita. Writing on one occasion to the Karmapa, he refers to "greedy Milarepa, spiteful and jealous Marpa, and the Karmapa who has lost his morality", concluding that he does not wish to meet him at his "place of blackness"[50]. Similarly when he received a blessing-thread from Tsongkhapa, instead of hanging it around his neck he wound it around his penis, saying he hoped it would bring him luck with many more ladies[51].

And once when the great lama Ngawang Chogyal was giving initiations to the public, Drukpa Kunlé came bursting into the middle of the crowd chasing a deer, which he killed in front of the lama[52].

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49 Drukpa Kunlé (1455-1521), *Autobiography*, op.cit. vol. *Ga*, folio 54. In typical mischievous style, he titled his autobiography *Halehule*, which we might render as'gobbledygook'!

50 Literally, 'place where nine black or evil signs meet'.

51 By Jé Tsongkhapa is meant the (fourth) Dalai Lama.

52 The rest of this story is interesting. Ngawang was a great lama, and a relative of Drukpa Kunlé. Ngawang had told him to stop following him around, shaming him with his foolery, so Drukpa Kunlé retorted that maybe he should precede Ngawang, as his superior. So he did precede Ngawang to this village, but stayed in the forest, hunting. After the great sacrilege of

Amongst our saints, Drukpa Kunlé holds a very special place. Whilst he manifested all the signs of a Siddha, none can give any definite or absolute interpretation of his deeds; just as no-one can fix any fault on him. In this, part of his mastery is recognised: it was his skilful ability to prevent us from such categorising. And though he had neither any fixed residence nor any Root Lama, yet he took teachings from whichever lama he happened to find appropriate, including, as we have seen, from Pemalingpa together with Droshul Drodul Lethro Lingpa.

PEMALINGPA AND THE FIFTH DALAI LAMA

The five Terton Kings, of whom Pemalingpa is the fourth, have been recognised not only by the Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya schools, but also within the Gelug school. In the Gelug school, the lineage of the great Tsongkhapa continues in the Dalai Lamas, who are considered emanations of Avalokiteshvara; and most notably, the famous Fifth Dalai Lama, Lobsang Gyatsho (1617-1682) was a disciple of the teachings of Pemalingpa. This is recorded in the notebooks kept by the Dalai Lama as a diary of his life[53]. Lobsang Gyatsho cites Guru Padmasambhava's prophecy about the Treasure Revealers to come, where it is written "the Five Kings of the Tertons will be accompanied by the hundred Great Tertons. The five King Tertons will be: Nyang Nyima Wozer, Guru Chowang, Dorjé Lingpa, Pemalingpa and Dongak Lingpa", and the Dalai Lama goes on to note: "they were thus prophesied by Guru Rinpoche, as is confirmed by many books".

The Fifth Dalai Lama received the spiritual initiations and empowerments of Pemalingpa's lineage from the Minling Terchen, Terdak Lingpa[54]. These are noted in detail by him, from the beginning to the 43rd folio. "At the Mani Gonpa, the Heart Son of Guru Padmasambhava, called Pemalingpa, received the Treasures Address and following this, on the auspicious night of the fifteenth, from Naringdrak the *Longsel Sangwa Nyingchu* text was revealed. After the Burning Lake Termas, Pemalingpa's next discovery was the *Lama Norbu Gyatsho* Terma from Lhodrak Sengé Dhong..."[55]

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killing the deer in front of the lama, he ate the meat - probably noisily ! - in public. But after eating, he wrapped the bones back inside the skin, and gave it a push, saying, "Go away and graze again!" - whereupon the deer sprang away unharmed. Ngawang was astonished at this display of magic by Drukpa Kunlé, and felt obliged to uphold his own reputation; so he took off his robe and hung it over a sunbeam. The sun's ray was slightly deflected. But then Drukpa Kunlé took his own bow and arrow, and hung them on another sunbeam. Needless to say, his sunbeam did not bend even a fraction !

53 Fifth Dalai Lama, vol.*Ga*, folio 279. For explanation of the different classes of Tertons see Thondup, op.cit p.71. The Fifth Dalai Lama's description gives the three classes of Sovereign, Major and Minor Tertons: *gter ston rgyal po lnga la bran brgyas bskor*; *gter chen brgya*; *gter phran stong*.

54 Again, there is a profusion of names: common name, religious name, and other honorific or spiritual titles. This Minling Terchen is also known as Jurmé Dorjé and as Chogyal Terdaklingpa (1646-1714); an emanation of Berotsana, he was founder of the great Mindroling monastery.

55 Probably the Sengé Dzong which is today within Bhutan, south of Lhodrak.

Chogyal Terdaklingpa the Minling Terchen had held a lengthy ceremony with initiations for the Dalai Lama. During these ceremonies, on the Dalai Lama's request he also gave the series of teachings known as the *Intermediate State Teachings*[56] ; it consists of the following.

Firstly, the Five Antidotes, that is the teachings of the Five Wisdoms which overcome the Five Poisons:

--The Antidote to Hatred, the Intermediate Teachings of Illusive Body,
--The Antidote to Pride, the Great Seal of Emptiness,
--The Antidote to Desire-Attachments, the Psychic Fire Teachings,
--The Antidote to Envy, the Perfection Teachings for Complete Action,
--The Antidote to Sloth, the Dream of Clear Light Teachings.

Secondly, the Eightfold Actualisation Practice for the Great Consummation of Padma Kara, with tutelary deities:

--the Understanding of Diversity of Guru Padmasambhava,
--the Wisdom of Guru Loden Chogsé,
--the Control Over All Beings of Guru Padma Gyalpo,
--the Self-Restraint of Guru Nyima Wozer,
--the Conquest of Demons and Evil Spirits of Guru Sakya Sengé,
--the Annihilation of Incorrect Views of Guru Sengé Dradog,
--the Conquering of Foes of Guru Dorjé Drolé.

The Dalai Lama has noted that he received all the above teachings and initiations from the master Terdak Lingpa, and states his deep reverence towards Terton Pemalingpa, both as one of his spiritual masters, and as the fourth of the Five Terton Kings.

THE WORKS OF NGAWANG DRAKPA

The Terton Ngawang Drakpa is recognised as a reincarnation of Acharya Yeshé Yang, a contemporary of Guru Rinpoche and one of his twenty-five Great Disciples. Ngawangdrakpa's collected works are known as the *Treasure Jewels*[57]. In the second volume, one reads the following about Terton Pemalingpa.

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56 *Bar do'i khrid,* a fairly short Bardo text by Pemalingpa. The five antidotes are *rmi lam gyi khrid, phyag chen gyi khrid, gtum mo'i khrid, rdzog chen gyi khrid* and *rmi lam 'od gsal gyi khrid.*

57 See bibliography. Yongdzin Ngawang Drakpa, originally from Paro, lived shortly after Pemalingpa's time, and is well-known both in Bhutan and Tibet; he is one of the hundred Major Tertons. He is listed by Kongtrul as one of over twenty Tertons to have been active in Bhutan; see also Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History,* p.156. He took over the Bodmo Rinchen gompa from Drungdung Rinpoche, and together with his disciple Tshering Dorjé, established Nephu. A major disciple was the lama Sogdogpa (1552-1624), author of a famous defence of the Terma tradition entitled *Rtsod lan 'brug sgra seng ge nga ro.*

I, Ngawang Drakpa, of the Tantric lineage, at the time of meditating at Bomo Rinchen hermitage, had a dream of Terton Pemalingpa, standing in the sky, accompanied by the sound of the Dharma. I looked up and saw many rainbows, in full circles in the midst of the heavens, and in their centre Pemalingpa clad in a saffron robe and Ugyen Lotus cap. His forefinger pointed to the sky, and in his left hand he carried a book; and from his mouth rays of Wisdom shone. Even as I longed to be in the presence of the Holy Saint, from the sky Pemalingpa spoke to me as follows:

"Son, do not wonder: let your Mind just see:
All phenomena are but the gestures of Dharmakaya.
There is no high and low, no vast or narrow,
No need to practise the Five Paths and the Ten Stages:
Son! Be aware of your own Mind,
And let it soar in the void of the sky."

Then Pemalingpa extended his hand towards me, and I, at once reaching for it, found myself standing before him.

Then I, Ngawang Drakpa, was ushered into the Divine Palace of Guru Rinpoche by Pemalingpa. Inside, there was a great throne made of the Five Jewels[58] , and upon the throne sat Ugyen Dorjé Chang, shining with the Five Radiances of Wisdom. To his right were all the Indian and the Tibetan Siddhas with ornaments of bone: some in the cross-legged posture, others in the half-crossed posture, others again in the dancing posture, with ritual bells and drums in their hands. Their different colours were the Five Colours of Wisdom. When I thought of the undreamed-of boon of receiving the holy counsel of Ugyen Dorjé Chang, Pemalingpa said to me:

"Do not wonder; be aware of your own Mind;
This is indeed the Unsurpassed Heaven,
This divine palace is miraculously grown,
Its Lama is Sangdu Dorjé Chang, Lord of All Time.
His attendants are the ocean of Tantric Masters.
No offering is needed to gain these initiations,
Offer only the flower of Innate Wisdom[59] ,
And pray with your deepest heart:
Thus the Lama shall guide you."

But still I could not believe that I might really receive the initiations, as it is said the Tertons of old had received all initiations, instructions and prophecies directly from the Guru. Even as this thought was in my mind, Terton Pemalingpa addressed the Great Lama with the following words:

"O Dorjé Chang! You, who are all Buddhas,
You, Lord Padma Thothrengtsel
Knower of all things, of all Time:

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58 The Five Jewels (*gser, mu tig, dngul, byu ru, mu men*) are: gold, pearl, silver, coral and lapis.

59 *Zangs thal gyi rig pa*, or: *rang byung gi rig pa*; terms used almost exclusively by the Nyingma school, meaning innate, spontaneous or self-arisen wisdom.

Here is a blessed son:
During our Lord Guru's time in Tibet
With the Dharma King,
Spreading the Tantras and the innermost secrets of Truth,
This was a great translator, accurate and sure;
This is Jamyang Yeshé Yang, whose many rebirths since
Have been in far-off Monyul of Bhutan.
By Guru Rinpoche's grace, by your own prayer,
He is the Supreme Holder of my lineage,
He is the Master of the Tantric Vehicle,
He the hierarch of this declining age.
Many beings has he released from suffering,
And he needs all powers for his works of Grace:
So, Lord - empower and instruct him!"

Then Guru Dorjé Chang spoke: "As indeed this is the emanation of beloved Yeshé Yang, then the empowerments and the quintessential instructions shall be revealed. You, Peling, arrange the rites, and so it shall be done for the blessed son."

Then Pemalingpa replied:

"To the Mandala of naturally clear Awareness
I display the Mandala of transparent Wisdom.
This palace is created by miracle:
I am drawing no mandala of coloured sand.
See, son: now see the sky!

Ngawang Drakpa then continues by describing the blissful mandala which he perceived in the sky, and his sudden insight into the wisdom which was being imparted to him:

I looked up, and beheld the Peaceful and the Wrathful deities, assembled together: shining, clear, the radiant Mandala itself. I thought to myself: indeed, this Mandala is not like those which I am used to drawing on earth; this one is Natural Wisdom, it is spontaneously manifest. Oh, Ah La La, now, I truly desire initiation into these spheres! Then, prostrating myself I implored the Lord as follows:

"Here is the Heart of Lord Dorjé Chang,
Lord Padma Thothrengtsel!
Open, shining door of Grace, for me
This palace of Primordial Wisdom:
Now empower me!"

Lord Ugyen Rinpoche spoke again then, saying, "O blessed son, then listen keenly. Even though life is, in its primordial state, enlightened, it is temporarily obscured by delusions and unknowing. Thus the Mandala of Natural Wisdom has not appeared to you until now. But now you must realise the self-arising, spontaneous nature of Truth."

Then from the coiled hair on the Lama's forehead, a white beam shone, entering my forehead. The Great Lama said: "This initiation is that of the Body of All Buddhas. Your clinging body is now destroyed, and through this initiation, you are inseparable from the Body of Buddha."

From the neck and heart of the Lama, red and blue rays of light shone forth, irradiating my own neck and heart. The Lama said: "Now this initiation is that of the Speech and Mind of All Buddhas. You are purified from the pleasures and sufferings of karmic attachment and bad propensities, and free from the Five and the Three Poisonous Delusions. Now your Speech and your Mind are inseparable from the Adamantine Speech and Adamantine Mind of All Buddhas."

Again from the three Doors of the Lama issued rays, entering my own, and the Lama said: "Thus, blessed son, your Body, Speech and Mind transform into Buddha Nature. You have the Fourfold Empowerment. These four Initiations are the Four Kayas"[60]. The Lama continued: "Now I shall reveal to you the Inner Initiation of Wisdom, so you must pay attention with great care. There is no need to concern your mind, nor to focus your attention on any particular thing. Upon the attainment of the Great Emptiness, there is no longer any shade or colour of distraction; for it is Nirvana itself. Thus what you have realised is the initiation of Badra Kaya's Wisdom. The Lama's body has entered yours and all Deities are within; and they are indistinguishable from you." Then the Lama raised his right hand with the Vajra to his head, and the left holding the *drilbu* bell rested on his hip, and he said:

"The world manifests as the diversity of phenomena;
Do not perceive Samsara and Nirvana as two.
The nature of reality is beyond the limitation of such
categories;
So do not grasp at the parade of worldly things.
Everything partakes of the Clear Light.
Do not let your mind go chasing around,
For all Deities are within you:
There is no need to search for them from without.
Understand that Wisdom is innate:
By doing nothing, all vices are cleansed,
By doing nothing, all initiations are gained;
Without any prayer, all Deities are inborn in you,
Without any effort, all the Paths and Stages are attained.
This is the Dharma Kaya of Innate Light:
Now, sink into the sphere of Wisdom."

As he finished speaking these words, a great feeling of bliss pervaded me, and my Three Doors opened in contemplation. I said: "Now I understand that Mind is, in its

60 The Four basic Empowerments are the Vase, Secret, Word, and Wisdom Initiations. For the Four Kayas, see note 39.

natural state, free from the need for conceptualising or interpreting of any kind, and that true understanding of Emptiness means freedom from all such mental constructs."

Then Ugyen Rinpoche said: "Blessed son, after many aeons have passed, this Pemalingpa will take rebirth under the name of Buddha Rinchen Gyaltshen, and at that time you will strengthen and spread the Dharma, becoming in your turn a Bodhisattva. So, too, those who are in contact with you in this life will also gain enlightenment." Standing there in divine Padmasambhava's palace, I thought to myself: "Even though I am but a man, now I am seeing all the Siddhas, and I have been receiving the initiations of the Great Vehicle from the Guru himself! I would rather remain in this good aeon than return again and again to the southern continent, the human world, in increasingly dark times. I wish to stay here!" But Pemalingpa said, "Son, the time is not ripe for you to stay here. Remember your own place, your own lama! You may come back here when sixty years have passed: till then, continue in contemplation. Stay in your hermitage, and be of benefit to sentient beings."

This caused me to think of my lama, and of my own home; and at once I awoke, to find myself back in the hermitage at Bomo Rinchen. Upon waking, this whole vision was vividly clear in my mind, and thus I have written it all down, at this hermitage, on the eighth day of the Hare month in the Sheep year.

Thus is recorded the vision of Ngawangdrakpa, when he was taken by Terton Pemalingpa to the Guru's heaven which is called Zangdokpelri, the Glorious Copper-Coloured Mountain.

TARANATHA

In the modern world, dreams, visions and other manifestations of what is called the 'subconscious', tend to be disregarded. But in the Buddhist view, this is an error. The vision of one such as Ngawang Drakpa, just as the dreams and visions of many Tertons, need to be considered carefully. Some people say that dreams are not real: but, according to the great saints, there is no fundamental difference between the dreaming and the waking states. This is expounded, for example, in the biography of Jetsun Taranatha[61], where he writes: "Dreams and imaginings appear to be incredible, but on the contrary they must be considered and treated with as much care as factual reality. Though the waking state is usually considered more important than dreams, do not disregard the dreaming state. For if dreams, of which we are aware, were without significance, so would our awareness itself be void of meaning, and then the reality of the waking state would have to be defined as equally worthless." Taranatha goes on to show that from the philosophical point of view dreams and awakeness are equally important, and he finally concludes that there is no significant difference between them.

Guru Rinpoche's Heart Son, Pemalingpa, lived under the continual protection and guidance of the Guru himself, through the Dakinis who are the Guru's manifestations and

61 Taranatha (1575-1634), of the Jonangpa school; quoted from his *Gsang ba'i mam thar.*

guardians; as we say, his bodies and his shadows. The events that befell the Terton, whether in reality or in dreams and visions, were foretold by the Guru and the Dakinis. Pemalingpa himself treated his dreams as being just as significant as waking reality: his insights and prophecies came to him in this way, they were always confirmed by reality and thus in no way to be divorced from it.

In Buddhism, there are four Reliances or Corrective Reliances, which are:

1. Relying on teachings, not on the person;
2. Relying on meaning, not on the means of expression;
3. Relying on definitive, not interpretative teachings;
4. Relying on wisdom, not on everyday consciousness[62].

A Buddhist must progress through these four stages. At an advanced state of spiritual maturity, the borderlines between everyday, dream, visionary consciousness and other states, are not as simple as they appear to us.

And again, our capacities are different, in function of our karmic state; Buddhism describes three basic categories of ordinary beings, given in pairs as follows:

1. The old person and the youth,
2. The scholar and the unintelligent person,
3. The exalted being and the beginner[63].

The youth, the unintelligent one and the beginner are called children; the old person and the scholar are a little above them; the exalted being is far above these. Exalted beings are those who have gained full understanding of the doctrines of Emptiness; their observations are observations of wisdom, like those of Bodhisattvas; this includes their dreams. Ordinary beings, relying on the common state of mind, are not free from passions and delusions and their experience is thus not illumined in wisdom.

The difference between these types of person, is as great as that between earth and sky. This is why Taranatha stresses that unless one is enlightened, at least to some extent, one perceives dreaming as illusion and waking as reality.

All-knowing Jetsun Taranatha records that he too received Pemalingpa's initiations from the Taklung Zhabdrung Rinpoche; mentioning in particular those known as *Lama Sangdu, Thukdrup and Drakmar*. On folio 128a he records how he travelled from his seat at Lhundrup Dzong to Taklung for these initiations, staying there for a period of two months.

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62 The Four Reliances (*rton pa bzhi*) are: 1. *Tshig la mi rton don la rton*; 2. *Gang zag la mi rton chos la rton*; 3. *Rnam shes la mi rton ye shes la rton*; 4. *Drang don la mi rton nges don la rton*.

63 Three types are contrasted here. The first pair of opposites are those who are old or young in age, i.e. Body; secondly, those of good or poor intelligence, corresponding to the level of Speech; and thirdly those of advanced or novice spirituality, e.g. the level of Mind. By Beginner (*las dang po pa)* is meant one who, though only starting, has truly entered on the path of spiritual commitment, and is thus worthy of great respect.

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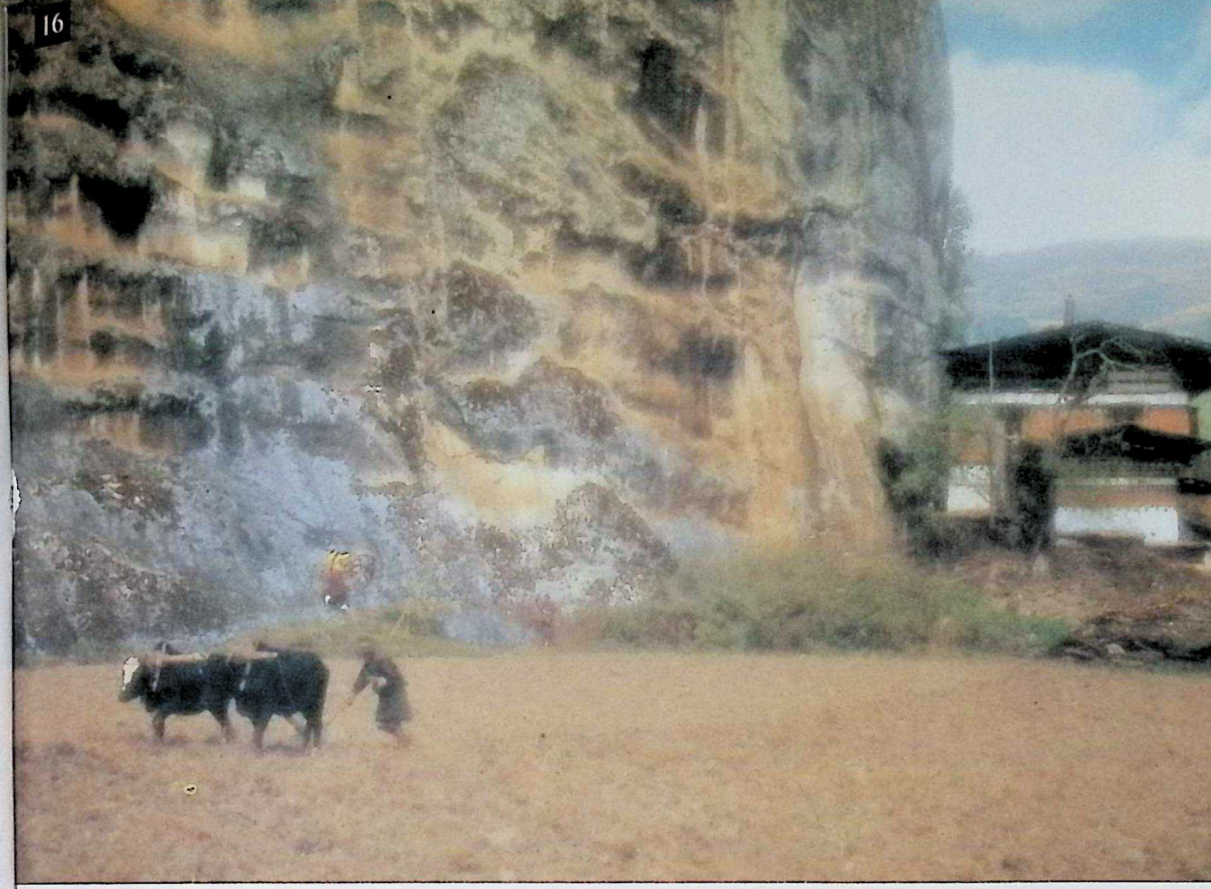

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डा. डिल्ली रमण रेम्मी
कल्याणी रेम्मी स्मारक

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These two, Taklung Rinpoche and Taranatha, are thus to be added to the long list of figures who have declared their faith in Terton Pemalingpa.

JAMGON LODOE THAYÉ

Throughout the centuries since Pemalingpa's death, renowned lamas and scholars have continued to make reference to him. In more recent times may be cited the famous nineteenth century work known as the *Biography of One Hundred Tertons* by Jamgon Lodoe Thayé[64], who is seen as one of the greatest saints of modern time and is named 'little brother of the Thousand Buddhas'. He is also named Kongtrul Yonten Gyatsho.

Jamgon's incarnation history is as follows: from the Buddha Mopa Nangzé the disciple Ananda emanated in the time of Buddha Shakyamuni. He then reappeared as the translator Berotsana, mentioned earlier, during the reign in Tibet of King Trisong Detsen and the spread of Buddhism by Padmasambhava. The magnitude of Berotsana's work and skill as translator was praised by fellow translator Ngo Loden Sherab as follows: "Amongst translators, his light is as the endless expanse of the sky: Kawa Paltseg and Chogro Luyi Gyaltshen are as the sun and the moon; Rinchen Zangpo as the dawn star; as for myself, I am but as a firefly".

Berotsana then reappeared consecutively as Rechung Dorjé Drakpa, Terchen Dorjé Lingpa and Chogyal Terdak Lingpa before his incarnation as Jamgon Lodoe Thayé.

Jamgon Lodoe Thayé's greatest work was his collection of the Treasure texts, which is especially revered within the Nyingma and Kagyu schools. His scholarship is very highly esteemed by all the sects, and his skills as a writer are almost unsurpassed in Tibetan history. He is also held to be an emanation of Vajrapani. Such scholars combine great faith and great intellectual abilities. Only after years of study and careful exercise of their spiritual judgement do they know whether texts or traditions are valid or not.

It is said over and over again that Buddhism must be based not only on Faith but on Reason too[65]. Lord Buddha Shakyamuni himself said: "Scholars and monks, you must consider my teachings carefully and experiment with them in practice: test their worth for yourselves, just as a goldsmith tests carefully to see if he has pure gold. Verify this and only when they prove their worth, then respect and practise them forever".

One may study and reflect upon the Buddha's teachings and try to describe or explain Buddhism according to one's own personal understanding. We consider such a way can only be fruitless until one genuinely practises the path associated with it.

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64 Jamgon Kongtrul Lodoe Thayé (1813-1899), one of the great Rimé lamas.

65 This accent on reasoning has always been central in Buddhism. Thus Panchen Ontrul Rinpoche states: "It is the power of such faith, based on reasoning and reinforced by familiarity in meditation... the strongest faith is based on reasoning". (*Chos Dbyangs* Vol.1 No.2, 1989, p.56).

Scholars such as Jamgon Lodoe Thayé therefore not only have immense knowledge, but great spiritual achievement through following the path leading to true understanding.

In his great work called the *Treasures of Knowledge*, Jamgon Lodoe Thayé wrote: "By the grace of Guru Padma Kara, the Nyingma lineage of Siddhas and Saints has remained unbroken: the dazzling brightness of the Mandala has not dimmed. The ocean of Amrit and Rakta has not dried up, nor have the teachings of Guru Rinpoche been debased by heretics and pledge-breakers[66] , those who lose faith and forsake their Tantric masters: the holy counsel of the Dakinis has not vanished, and the heat of their breath is still with us." And again: "The Termas are profound and vast; and they have exceptional qualities and powers."

In all, there are about seven hundred volumes which have been revealed by and practised by the Tertons.

JAMYANG KHYENTSÉ WANGPO

Another very famous figure of recent times who has confirmed Pemalingpa is Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo[67], first in a line of very eminent Tulkus of whom several emanations are active today. He is also the fifth of the Sovereign Tertons; revered as an emanation of both Vimalamitra and Trisong Detsen, he is also known as Dongak Lingpa.

Jamyang Khyentsé was a contemporary of, and the Root Lama of, Jamgon Lodoe Thayé: these two together are regarded as being among the very greatest spiritual figures of modern times. Jamyang Khyentsé's very voluminous works have been widely published. Originally from the Kham region, he founded the monastery of Dzongsar, and later became the prime inspiration of the nineteenth-century non-sectarian Rimé movement.

DISBELIEVERS

When people such as the Governor of Chokhor, Thupa, tried to insult Pemalingpa, in return the result was not harm but great good. This is recognised as an effect which accompanies saintly people. The story of Lamthrenpa, a Brahmin youth in the time of Lord Buddha, is often told to illustrate this.

As a boy, Lamthrenpa attempted to learn, but was unable to remember even the first two syllables of the simplest prayer, which begins "Om, Buddha..." By the time he remembered the syllable "Bu", he had forgotten the "Om", and whichever of the two he tried to memorise, he forgot the other. During his beginnings as a monk, even after three months he could not recite a single stanza. It seemed nothing could enter his head at all.

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66 Pledge-breakers (*dam tshig nyams pa*): ones who turn against their religious vow.

67 Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (1820-1892). The Khyentsé lineage is very highly revered in Bhutan.

Then the Lord Buddha told him to learn one sentence instead: "Sweep away dust, abandon defilements". But even this he could hardly remember. So Buddha ordered him to clean the monks' sandals in order to purify his mind. Thus Lamthrenpa spent many years, just reciting and meditating on these words. Until at last, he reached Arhathood. But no-one knew it.

Then one day, Lord Buddha commanded Ananda to send Lamthrenpa to a nunnery as the new abbot there. Hearing of this, the nuns were outraged: protesting that no-one was more stupid, and that they knew far more doctrine than he and had nothing whatsoever to learn from him.

So to humiliate him, the twelve head nuns convened a great assembly. Whilst six built an oversized religious throne for him, the others went about the district announcing to all that on the following day, a great Arhat was coming. They went so far as to say that those who failed to attend such an occasion as this, were likely to wander in Samsara for ever. So on the next day, there was a huge crowd.

Seeing that the great teacher was none other than Lamthrenpa, whose stupidity was legend amongst the local people, some thought to leave again, angry at the nuns' deceit; but in the end, most stayed, if only out of curiosity as to what might happen.

When he entered, Lamthrenpa could not even reach up to the seat of the throne they had made for him. But then, as the crowd watched, he stretched out his hand, and his arm became as long as an elephant's trunk: then, pressing the throne with his hand, it became small, and, mounting it, Lamthrenpa crossed his legs and sank into meditation.

As they watched, his body rose to the four directions, and as he meditated in the element of Fire, rays of light shone from him, water issued, and after a long time he pronounced the words: "Sweep away dust, abandon defilements". The full meaning of the one simple phrase was revealed to all those present: avoidance of the three Bodily vices, the four vices of Speech and the three of Mind. And all were enlightened. Then Lord Buddha said: "Thus, like the ancients at Varanasi, Lamthrenpa too has turned the Wheel of the Dharma."

So it was that those who did not understand his real nature tried to insult him: but his noble state prevailed upon them, and was ultimately to their great benefit. Likewise, Thupa had tried to denigrate Pemalingpa before a large crowd at Mebartsho, for until then no-one knew of his divine gifts; but subsequently he became a devoted follower of the Terton, supporting him throughout his life, and receiving many blessings in return.

Similarly, in his youth Shantideva was thought to be exceedingly stupid, and the pandits of Nalanda university wished to expel him by forcing him to expound teachings for them, in order to reveal his ignorance. But instead of the expected humiliation, Shantideva gave the famous *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* sermon; and during the sermon, he himself disappeared bodily after the ninth chapter, but his voice could be heard by all until the end of the teachings.

In both Bhutan and Tibet, then, there were people who doubted in Pemalingpa's gifts. In Lhodrak, this was the case as we have seen with the Nangso, who subsequently became life-long patron of the Terton.

Thus it has happened to many, perhaps most, great spiritual figures in history whose attributes and activities are of an extraordinary nature. So it is not surprising that Pemalingpa had critics and enemies too. He does not hide this in his autobiography. A particular example he gives is that of the Shangpa lama, Namkha, whom we mentioned above. Lama Namkha appeared on one occasion with his followers to disrupt teachings Pemalingpa was giving to a large audience in the region of Zhamling. He demanded that two religious thrones be set up, so that he and Pemalingpa could expound in turn, and that the people be ordered to listen to both lamas and judge which was the better or genuine one. However, there was no listener at Lama Namkha's teachings. Then he called Pemalingpa a fraud and a devil. Quite reasonably the chiefs and religious patrons of Zhamling had said to Namkha that since Pemalingpa was a special guest, come from afar, they wished to attend his teachings, and that they could attend Lama Namkha's at any time since he was from their district. When Namkha angrily rejected this, they went further and said that, as soon as Pemalingpa had left, he could then immediately hold his own ceremonies and sermons and they would obey as desired in arranging all that was necessary. But the lama only grew more furious.

Pemalingpa's reaction finally was to propose to the patrons that he and Namkha should undergo a kind of test of fire. He said that otherwise Lama Namkha would never believe him and would go on spreading malicious slander: so if he, Pemalingpa, were consumed by the flames, it would rid the world of a devil and fraud; if Lama Namkha were burned, they would have rid the world of a jealous scoundrel; and if both he and Namkha perished, then the Buddha's doctrine would have been doubly purified of two bad lamas. On receiving this proposal, however, Lama Namkha collected his followers and fled.

Pemalingpa wrote a 'secret prophecy' about the Shangpa Lama as follows:

"A holder of the Tantric lineage,
The rebirth of Bonpo Takna named Namkha
Will appear from Shang;
His betrayal of the pledge will echo in all directions,
It is the Dharma sound of the Five Poisons.
In appearance white but black in his mind,
He will spread the seeds of hell itself,
And whoever has contact with him
Will be led to damnation".

As described in this prophecy, Lama Namkha was a reincarnation of a Bon Minister, who had practised evil rites in his former life and was thus reborn with the great affliction of jealousy. Pemalingpa however, was not affected by the evil this man attempted to bring on him, and the harm done was only to Namkha himself, leading to

'even greater spiritual downfall. It is said in a Bhutanese expression: the rising sun cannot be eclipsed by the mere palm of a hand.

THE TERMA TRADITION IN THE OTHER SCHOOLS

Concealed Treasures, Treasure Teachings, Treasure Revealers: these are terms which we find not only in the 'Old School' Nyingma tradition, but also in the other schools of Vajrayana Buddhism. The Treasure tradition was well known in India, too, before the time when the Dharma spread to the Land of the Snow[68]. The tradition is explained in detail in works such as the *Biography of One Hundred Tertons* of Jamgon Lodoe Thayé, and the *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* by Dudjom Rimpoche.

Within the New Schools one finds many Tertons too. A few of these have been noted already. There is also the well-known figure of Jowo Atisha. When he went to visit the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, he began to wonder whether there might not be some written explanations to be found as to the origins of the temple. Then all at once a poor peasant woman approached him, and asked him whether he wished to know about the founding of the temple by King Songtsen Gampo. Atisha, thinking to himself that she could be a Dakini, then mentally made prostrations towards her, and replied that he did indeed wish to know.

Then the woman said to him: "There is a pillar in the temple, shaped like a vase: measure two and a half fathoms from it along the beam which it supports, and within the beam you shall find a Treasure, which you must not show to people". Then the Jowo realised that this was indeed one of the Natural Dakinis.

Following her directions, he found the beam and split it open at the indicated place; and found within a scroll which had been written by the Royal Ministers of the time. It was titled *Dawai Dojo.* Reaching into the aperture again he found a second scroll, this one having been written by the Queens and entitled *Logyu Darkar Selwa.* And then he extracted a third scroll, containing the King's Testament. After copying down these texts immediately, with the assistance of four disciples, he reconcealed them in their hiding place that same night, with the aid of the Treasures' Protector deities.

It is also recorded that Atisha recovered the text called *Tsugtor De-nga* from the Indian monastery of Beta Pemachen. Thus he too, the founder of the great Kadampa tradition, was a Terton.

Similarly, Lotsava Jampa Pal of Throbu revealed the Tantric Treasure text *Noejin Yukthog* from Jagoeshong.

Treasure teachings are likewise recorded in the biography of Milarepa's great disciple Rechung Dorjé Drakpa. This was written by the Yogi Goetshang Repa. There it

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68 The Nyingma school insists that the Terma tradition predates Guru Rinpoche's time.

is recounted from folio 150 how Rechungpa concealed a text in the cliff at Ngamshoe Dzong, and several others at Lhodrak Kharchu, with the following prayer:

Goddesses and gods of this place, to you,
To the spirits of all phenomenal things,
I entrust this essence-like, secret Teaching;
Now guard it constantly.
When generations three have gone,
Shall appear the beloved, blessed son
Whose name is Namkhé Goetshang;
To him shall be given my instructions,
And I pray for its fruitful revelation;
May my holy wish be done.

It is then recorded how during the last of his three journeys in India, Rechung received various profound teachings from his Root Lama Tiphu, which the lama told him were not to be disseminated but should be concealed for a later age. Thereafter is told how he concealed these texts, the *Sangyé Thoechog*, the *Zhungthri Chudruk* and a History of the Dharma, at Dung Gompa. There is a rock looking like a wrathful face at the corner of the monastery, and the Treasures were concealed within the nose of this figure, entrusted to the local deities and Protectors.

Rechungpa predicted further that the destined Revealer of these texts would appear after seven generations, "a devout follower of Dharma, courageous, faithful and wise"; adding that should any other person attempt to extract the Treasures, before that time, their life force would be stricken and their body reduced to ashes by the Treasure Guardians.

Thus is recorded the concealment of Termas by Rechung Dorjé Drakpa according to the instructions of his Root Lama. Subsequently, the Treasure was revealed from Lhodrak Kharchu Devikota by Tsangpa Jaré in the Male Earth Monkey Year when the latter was twenty-eight years old.

So through Rechungpa and others the Treasure tradition is also very well known within the Drukpa Kagyu school. For sure, many people have thought that the Terma tradition is to be found uniquely in Nyingma; but in fact many biographies and other sources attest that it is to be quite widely found within nearly all the other schools and sects too.

CHAPTER 6: LATER LIFE AND LEGACY

TEMPLES AND HOLY PLACES

Of the monasteries, temples and holy sites in Bhutan associated with Terton Pemalingpa, many are very famous today. A few buildings remain as ruins only, such as the Mani Gompa in the Chel valley. At the Terton's birthplace itself, on the upper slopes of the valley, there is a small chorten, although there are no farm houses in the immediate vicinity now. There is also a very old cypress tree said to have been planted by him on the death of his mother, and a series of rocks with miraculous footprints.

The most popular pilgrimage sites associated with the Terton are the Mebartsho gorge and sites of other Terma revelations such as the Lion Rock at Chodrak, the Vajra Rock, the Kurjé hill and Rimochen. Kurjé and Rimochen have, in addition, long historical antecedents going back to the time of Guru Rinpoche.

Pemalingpa also has particular associations with the well-known temples of Tharpaling, Jampa, Tsilung and Padmasambhava in Bumthang, and with ones farther afield such as the eight 'Ling' monasteries[69], Gangté Gompa, Dramitsé in East Bhutan and others in southeast and southern Tibet. The main monasteries within Bhutan where his legacy is preserved and continued, are Tamzhing Lhundrupcholing in the Chokhor valley, Gangté, and the mountainside sanctuary at Kunzangdrak above Chel.

THE BUMTHANG REGION

The Jampa Lhakhang is, together with Kyerchu Lhakhang in Paro, considered to be the oldest temple in Bhutan. These two were founded a very long time ago, probably around the seventh century. They are often said to be part of a set of temples, established at all the corners of the Himalayan regions, in order to subdue the spirits of the pre-Buddhist world and environment. Within this scheme, Jampa Lhakhang represents the left knee of the Demoness[70]. The Jampa temple complex today consists of five temples, most of which are of more recent date. Pemalingpa undertook a major restoration of Jampa, and some of the wall paintings there are attributed to him. The doorway to the main temple with its very large statue of the Buddha of the Future, is protected by chain mail work executed by the Terton.

The small temple of Tsilung or Konchogsum, nearby Tamzhing, is also said to date back very far, and was similarly restored by Pemalingpa. It is famous for the fragment of a very large and ancient bell, and for a stone monolith in the courtyard. On the hillside just behind Tsilung, Termas were revealed both by Pemalingpa and earlier by the Bonpo Daktshalpa.

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69 See Note 71.

70 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, p.15-34, for a review of the various versions of this scheme.

Also nearby Tamzhing is the Padmasambhava Lhakhang, founded (or rather, refounded) by Pemalingpa in about 1490 under the name of Dekyiling.

At Rimochen in the upper Tang valley, Pemalingpa is said to have received the teachings of Terton Dorjé Lingpa during his youth. Dorjé Lingpa's own family seat lies at the Ugyencholing palace, farther up the valley; he was also one of Bhutan's most important spiritual figures.

The monastery complex of Tharpaling lies at an altitude of over 3500 metres, high above the Chumé valley which is the western of Bumthang's four main valleys. It was founded by the great fourteenth century saint and scholar, Longchen Rabjampa, who spent approximately fifteen years in the Bumthang region. Today Tharpaling houses over one hundred monks, and consists of several temples and a Shedra for teaching students. Near the top of the mountain, at over 3800 metres, is the sanctuary of Chodrak, founded by Lorepa in the thirteenth century[71] and built against a sacred cliff. Pemalingpa, who must have spent considerable time at Tharpaling, is especially associated with it through his incarnation lineage, which as we have recorded includes the great Longchenpa; and also due to at least two Termas he discovered there. One of these, the *Lama Gongdu*, was revealed from the earth near the site of the present Shedra; the other was revealed from a precipice known as the Lion Cliff, above Chodrak. The *ter-go* or treasure-door in the form of a round stone can be seen high up on the face of this rock.

THE FOUNDING OF TAMZHING MONASTERY

In Bumthang itself Pemalingpa was highly venerated by local personages such as the Chokhor Governor of the time, Kunthup, as well as Thupa Tashi and the two Choki Tashi brothers. Overwhelmed by the Terton's feats, they became important patrons of his. Consequently, they requested Pemalingpa to establish a main monastery down in the Bumthang plain, since he used to reside at the temples of Kunzangdrak, Pemaling and Dechenling all of which are situated up in the mountain valleys.

Tamzhing lies directly across the river from Jampa Lhakhang. A little way upstream from Jampa Lhakhang one finds the famous Kurjé hill, shaped like a pile of skulls, where the Kurjé temple complex stands and where the Terton also made discoveries; it was built around the rock which bears the imprint of Guru Rinpoche's body, below the very old cypress tree of which one branch, curling around the temple spire, is said to be the walking stick of the Guru. On the right and left side of the Kurjé temple, images later appeared spontaneously of Dorjé Phagmo and of the *Kili*[72].

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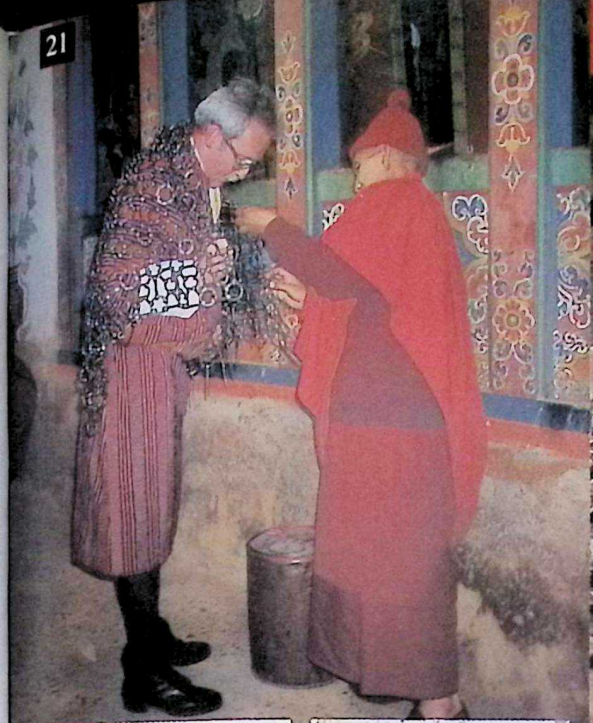
71 Lorepa (1187-1250), a famous disciple of Tsangpa Jaré.

72 There are three temples in the Kurjé complex, the most recent of which is a building of extraordinary quality and craftsmanship, completed recently under the patronage of Bhutan's Royal Family. The main image in the new temple is a two-storey high Demchog Yab-Yum, unique of its kind. Elsewhere on the Kurjé hill, one finds several other extremely sacred sites.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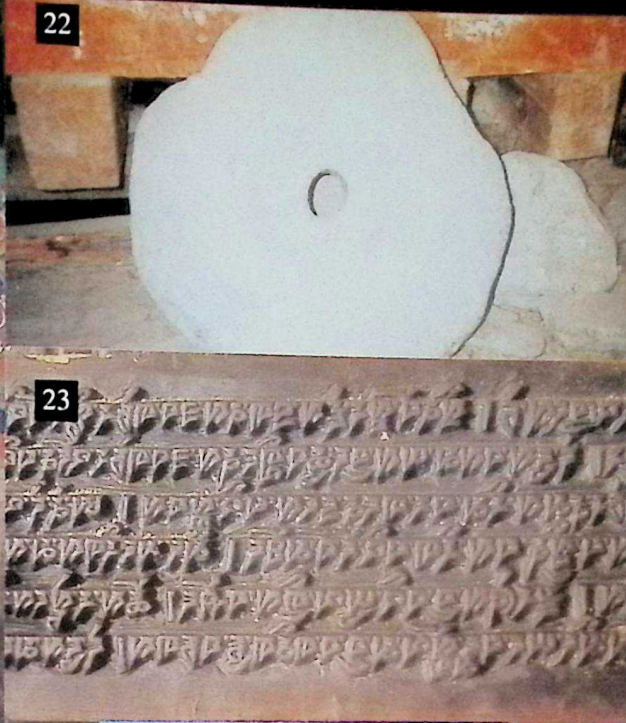
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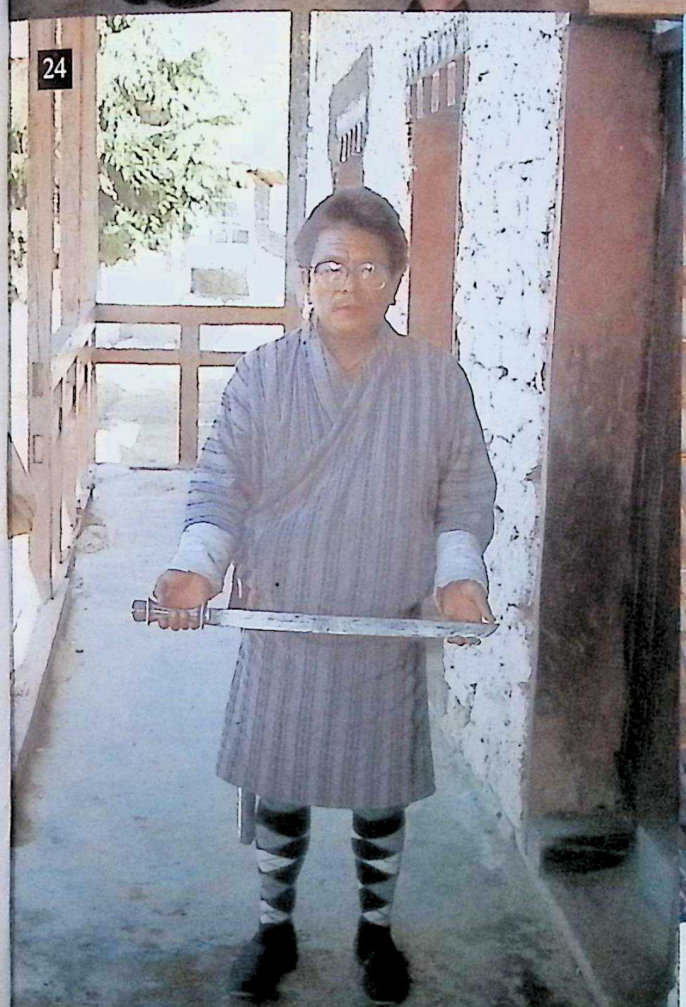
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Thus Pemalingpa's most important temple came to be situated in the heart of the valley. The foundation stone was laid on the nineteenth day of the Rat month in the Iron Bird Year, on a saturday of the Bull (1501). At this consecration ceremony, all the people of the region came to participate. It was at Tamzhing that the Terton spent much of the rest of his life.

KUNZANGDRAK

Many of Terton Pemalingpa's most sacred relics are kept at the mountain sanctuary of Kunzangdrak. It was begun by Pemalingpa in 1488 at an already famous spot known as the Rock of Tamdrin - the horseheaded Deity who was the Terton's own tutelary deity. Namkhé Nyingpo, the great translator and one of the twenty-five original disciples of Guru Rinpoche, is said to have meditated here. Kunzangdrak consists principally of four buildings. In the central temple, the Wangkhang, is a famous image of Guru Rinpoche brought from the old Mani Gompa; nearby is the small house used by Pemalingpa, with its sanctuary. Higher up the cliff is a small retreat room and shrine, known as Wozerphug, used by his famous son Dawa Gyaltshen. The most revered building of the four, the Khandroma Lhakhang, is an extraordinary structure, built by Pemalingpa against an almost sheer rock face. Like the great monastery of Samyé, built by Guru Rinpoche, the construction of this temple was assisted by Dakinis during the nights, after the foundations had first collapsed several times. Holy water seeps from the rock face above the building.

FARTHER AFIELD

In the Lhalung region of southern Tibet, the oldest monastery was established in the time of King Songtsen Gampo. Later restored by Pawo Tsuglag Threngpa, this monastery became the seat of the Kamtsang Kagyu school. During the chieftainship in Lhalung of the Nangso family, Pawo shifted to the monastery of Thegchog Rabgyeling which is in the region of Lhodrak Dowolung, and this too became one of Terton Pemalingpa's main monasteries.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

During his early life, Pemalingpa mastered a variety of crafts; although he is chiefly remembered amongst people as a blacksmith. Some of his work in metal has been mentioned, such as the iron pans, swords and knives. In particular, a suit of chain mail made by him is preserved at Tamzhing. Wood blocks and other calligraphic works from his hand are also preserved. At Kunzangdrak, these include wood block carvings of the Eight Auspicious Signs and some mandalas.

At Tamzhing is also preserved a Deer Mask created by him for a sacred dance; and in several places can be found evidence of his work with stone, including millstones for grinding grain. As at the Jampa Lhakhang, some of the wall paintings of Tamzhing are attributed to him.

Through these skills, the Terton demonstrated his ease in mastering and understanding his material environment and the works of ordinary people. This down-to-earth familiarity with daily skills is seen as a great virtue, confirming a saint's genuine understanding of the deeper levels of spiritual and nonmaterial phenomena.

PEMALINGPA'S TEACHINGS

Sentient beings are born into existence through one of the Four Gates, that is, from a womb, from an egg, from heat and moisture, or by miracle. Corresponding to these four are the Four Types of Mind Generation, in all of which Pemalingpa instructed disciples. In the initial stage of this Tantric practice one purifies the Body, Speech and Mind through meditation on the Mandala and Mantra of a Deity, while simultaneously developing the Divine Pride of identifying with that Deity.

Sentient beings suffer cyclic existence according to five patterns, depending on their karmic background and propensities; correspondingly there are the Five Paths leading towards Enlightenment. In all of these, too, Pemalingpa gave teachings and revealed the word of the Guru.

Sentient beings are ruled by desires, aversions and ignorance; they voyage through endless existences of continuing delusion. Pemalingpa, understanding innately the fruitlessness of worldly pleasures, felt pity for his fellow-beings; and his innate feeling of repulsion towards worldly concerns, led him to renounce them.

Sentient beings perceive their environment and its inhabitants as realities, they believe in these appearances and they seek permanence. Pemalingpa, perceiving innately the error of this, realised the impermanence of all things. Thus he taught people about the real nature of existence, and freed many from their suffering.

During his lifetime Pemalingpa composed many volumes, including both the Terma texts and other writings of his own. Within each volume one finds a variety of subjects, ritual prayers, meditation, medicinal, astrological and other writings. His works are further described by Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi in a subsequent section of this book.

Pemalingpa was from Bumthang, but it is impossible to know whether or not he expounded his teachings in the Bumthang language. Many of his disciples would have been unable to understand that language, though he could have used it locally. He had in any case to use the standard Choké in order to record his works in written form.

In general, all scholars in the Himalayas used Choké, which is the common language of the entire spiritual culture of Vajrayana, and was originally developed by Thonmi Sambhota from the central Tibetan language of U and Tsang; of course the word Choké itself means 'the language of religion'. All religious writings are in Choké, if one excepts special cases such as the 'Dakini script'. So no-one knows how the oral tradition was practised at that time. Even today, though, a teacher from Bumthang may

use the Bumthang language to explain things to local students, whilst in western Bhutan the national language, Dzongkha, would be sufficient.

THE OMENS OF DEATH

At the age of seventy-two, Terton Pemalingpa travelled for the last time to Lhalung on the invitation of his long-standing patron the Nangso Gyalwa. It was the Dog month of the Iron Dragon Year, 1520. There he gave extended initiations into the *Lama Norbu Gyatsho* Terma cycle; this was the longest series of initiations and teachings he had ever held in Tibet on his many visits there. Finally he returned home to Bumthang.

Shortly after his return, the women of Chokhor went to the Konchogsum temple[73]. When they entered to offer their butter lamps, they saw that the three statues were weeping. They dried away the tears with their scarves. At the same time, in the Tamzhing monastery itself, the very sacred statue known as Thongwa Kundol[74] also shed tears for three days, and bore a sad expression; butter lamps placed in front of it would not burn properly, despite the attentions of the temple attendants.

So too, other statues and protector images in the region were reported to have changed countenance. It was then early in the eleventh month, and very heavy snow began to fall, covering the Bumthang region and blocking all the mountain trails. The people said that such a heavy snowfall had never occurred before; old men could recall nothing like it in their lifetimes. Similarly, people recalled the swarms of locusts which had descended on the fields earlier that summer, destroying much of the harvest. So all began to wonder at these strange omens occurring in the region.

Some of the older folk, however, understood instinctively that these omens pointed to the imminent passing away of their saint. They recalled portents from the time of the death of Ratna Lingpa.

Then during the night of the eleventh of November, Pemalingpa fell ill. After he had lain ill for two days, in the evening a flock of the great Siberian cranes, which spend the winter in Bhutan, soared above the monastery of Tamzhing and circled over the Terton's house, uttering loud calls.

One of the Terton's sons, Lama Dawa Gyaltshen, had a dream of a woman clad in the blue dress of Mon, who told him: "Terton Pemalingpa will pass away in the Snake

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73 The small temple of Konchogsum, which is only a short distance from Tamzhing, is also known as Tsilung and as Chokhor Lhakhang, the name Pemalingpa uses for it. It is named after three famous statues, still to be seen there, which are said to have come flying from China, very long ago. It also contains a remarkable bell fragment, probably of eighth century origin.

74 Thongwa Kundol, a statue that can bring liberation to those who see it, is said by some to be one of Pemalingpa's Termas, though there are differing interpretations on this point.

Year". Another son, Drakpa Gyaltshen, had a dream in which he saw a sun setting three times.

In another portent, one day at the Dechenling monastery near Kunzangdrak everyone was astonished to hear the sound of ritual bells, drums, cymbals and trumpets. All the monks hurried inside the temple to see what was happening: but they saw nothing. The interior of the monastery however was filled with the smell of incense, and a few moments later they heard three loud thunderclaps.

Pemalingpa finally passed away at Tamzhing Lhundrup Choling on the third day of the new year, the Iron Snake Year. Sitting upright in meditational posture, at the moment of death he uttered the syllable 'A' many times over; he was holding the hands of his son Dawa Gyaltshen. Music sounded, five rainbows shone, and at all his monasteries there was a rain of flowers and the air was filled with perfume.

The Terton had instructed his family and followers not to disturb him for seven days after his death. This is the period called *wosel bardo* when the bodies of great lamas are left covered up but completely untouched. His counsel was followed, and he was left for about nine days. Then his disciples, removing the clothes from the body, found to their wonder that the Terton's hands were held before his heart, with index fingers crossed in the *digdzup* mudra.

The body showed no sign of decomposition at that time. Also it was noticed that when seen from a distance, the Terton's remains seemed to be very large, but when actually observed from nearby, they had shrunk to a cubit's length in size.

After the funeral rites and ceremonies, Terton Pemalingpa's body was embalmed within a vase and sealed into a chorten at Tamzhing.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

Tamzhing Monastery is the seat to this day of the reincarnations or Tulkus of Terton Pemalingpa. At present the eleventh recognised reincarnation of Pemalingpa lives in Bhutan.

In the temple at Tamzhing monastery, one finds not one but two thrones. Two other subsequent lines of Tulkus closely associated with Pemalingpa have their seats respectively at Tamzhing and at the monastery of Gangté: it is one of these whose throne can be seen beside that of Pemalingpa. The origin of these two Tulkus, and the part played by Bhutan's Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, may be related as follows.

The immediate incarnation of Pemalingpa was born in the Phubjika valley, where the famous Gangté Gompa is[75]. His name was Gyalwang Tenzin Drakpa. Upon the

75 Tradition has it that Pemalingpa himself prophesied his rebirth there and the founding of the monastery, when after a visit to the Phubjika valley he turned to look back towards that spot

discovery of this boy, Pemalingpa's son Dawa Gyaltshen moved to Phubjika, where he looked after and taught the boy, developing great fondness for him. The boy's successive incarnations are the Speech incarnations of Pemalingpa, and have since had their seat at Tamzhing.

Both Dawa Gyaltshen, and the son of this boy, in turn became great spiritual figures and reincarnate lamas themselves. Gyalwang when he grew up had a son called Gyalsé Pema Thinlé, who began the line of Gangté Tulkus that continues to this day. And it is the Mind incarnations of Dawa Gyaltshen, Pemalingpa's son, who share with their father's Tulkus the twin throne at Tamzhing.

The lineage of Tulkus of Pemalingpa has continued to this day as follows: Gyalwang Tenzin Drakpa; Kunkhyen Tshultrim Dorjé; Kunzang Dorjé; Tenzin Dupchog Dorjé; Kunzang Tenpé Gyaltshen; Ngawang Chokyi Lodoe; Kunzang Tenpé Nyima; Tenzin Chokyi Gyaltshen; Thubten Chokyi Dorjé and Rinchen Namgyel. These Tulkus have spread teachings of Pemalingpa in Kham, U-Tsang and Toe.

Regarding the Zhabdrung, Guru Rinpoche made the following prophecy: "Famous in the land of Kham, his teachings will spread in Ngari like a lightning flash in the night, and will reverberate like thunder throughout U and Tsang". An emanation of Avalokiteshvara, his full name was Zhabdrung Rinpoche Ngawang Namgyal[76]. Born in 1594, he came to Bhutan in 1616, the Fire Dragon year of the tenth Rabjung; and became Lord Protector of Three Realms. He established his main monastery at Pungthang Dechenphodrang, today's Punakha Dzong. The Zhabdrung was descendant of and heir to the founder of the Drukpa school at Ralung Druk Selshing in Tibet. Due to there being two rival claimants to the leadership, he moved south, and subsequently established himself as the great spiritual and temporal leader of Bhutan, unifying the country for the first time, and constructing the first of the well-known Dzongs.

The Zhabdrung met Gyalsé Pema Thinlé in Punakha, when the latter was already an old man.

Upon meeting him, the Zhabdrung showed the greatest reverence for the Tulku, praising him as Pemalingpa's spiritual heir. He asked the Tulku to give him teachings and to confer on him the initiations of all Pemalingpa's Termas. Tulku Pema Thinlé agreed willingly to this; however, since it was very hot in Punakha at that time, the two agreed to arrange the ceremonies during the coming winter. But Tulku Gyalwang passed away during the autumn.

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with the words "*sgang ya gi steng la ma 'ongs pa la nga'i gsang sngags kyi chos dar ba 'byung*".

76 The Zhabdrung is also considered an incarnation of Padma Karpo (1527-1592), a great scholar of the Kagyu school, especially important within the Drukpa Kagyupa branch, and twenty-fourth in the lineage descended from Marpa.

On hearing this, the Zhabdrung felt great sadness at having missed such an important opportunity. Desirous as he was to receive Pemalingpa's teachings, he searched around, visiting many other lamas; and finally he obtained all the Terton's teachings from the Lama Chojé Gyalwang[77].

He was thus equally excited when, a few years later, he heard of the discovery of the following emanation of Pemalingpa, a child who was named Tenzin Legpé Dondrup. He commanded that the boy be shown the highest reverence, and that Pemalingpa's teachings were to be accorded special devotion by all his subjects. Particular honour was also accorded to other great followers of the Terton, in particular Tulku Tshering Dorjé, the Nephu Tulku and the Tshamdak Tulku. These lines of Tulkus are to this day shown particular reverence in Bhutan, through their association with Terton Pemalingpa and with Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal[78].

The Zhabdrung also wished to have Pemalingpa's remains moved from Tamzhing to Punakha. After having deliberated on this with his cabinet, he then approached his vassal the Governor of Chokhor, since Tamzhing was in the district of this Governor, whose name was Rabten. Knowing that the monks and local populace would resist the move, the Governor had to resort to special devices in order to fulfil the Zhabdrung's orders. Thus in the Fire Bird Year Pemalingpa's remains were moved from Bumthang to Punakha, and placed in a chorten there, immediately becoming the focus of great devotion. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal entrusted a highly respected monk with the duty of guarding the sacred chorten.

There have been conflicting traditions concerning the origin of the remains in this chorten: many histories say the remains are those of Drakpa Gyaltshen. However, older historical sources, particularly the biography of the Thirteenth Jé Khenpo, Yonten Thayé, confirm that they are the remains of the Terton[79].

After passing away in the year 1651, upon his instructions the Zhabdrung himself was not cremated but likewise embalmed in a chorten in Punakha Dzong. Then a second guardian was appointed. This tradition continues up to the present day; the two are titled Machen Nam Nyi, and they have carried a very high rank corresponding to that of a Deputy Minister. The two are selected in turn from amongst the most respected monks for one year's duty as the guardians of the remains of the Zhabdrung and of Terton Pemalingpa.

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77 This lama, Chojé Gyalwang, also had a reputation as a nonconforming and even revolting personage. See Sakya Rinchen, *Byang chub sems dpa'i... (Two Lamas of the Pemalingpa Tradition)*, p.37

78 Tshering Dorjé's monastery is Paro Dongkhar Kunzangcholing. Nephu Tulku, Ngawang Padma Gyaltshen, has his seat at Thekchen Choling, also known as Datong Gompa, and the monastery of the Tshamdag Tulku, Ngawang Dorjé, is near Phuntsholing.

79 Yonten Thayé, 13th Jé Khenpo, 2nd vol., f.95a.

Thus Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who is recognised as a great saint in both Bhutan and Tibet, was one of the principal followers of Pemalingpa; and through his greatness as a statesman he too confirmed Pemalingpa's standing as one of the great spiritual figures of Bhutanese history[80].

80 Cf. *Rig-'dzin padma gling pa'i...* by the tenth Jé Khenpo, Tenzin Chogyal.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Thus we have seen how in the fifteenth century, the Heart Son of Guru Rinpoche miraculously revealed hidden treasures from cliffs, lakes and other places of concealment, and left behind him on several occasions, imprints of his feet and hands in solid rock.

Saints manifest their great powers on the three levels of Body, Speech and Mind, that is, on the material, mental and spiritual planes; the deeds mentioned above are the miraculous manifestations of the Body.

Terton Pemalingpa's manifestations on the level of Speech are his texts, his initiations, and other legacies such as the sacred dances which he left behind. Just as he learned all of the Nine Vehicles with apparent ease, so too he spread them to a large public following in many places. In Tibet, he spread the Terma teachings particularly in the regions of Ngari, U-Tsang and Do-Kham; but in addition people came to him from all the directions of the compass, drawn from afar as bees are to the nectar of most precious flowers.

The manifestations of Mind are Pemalingpa's intuitive insight and his selfless compassion in living to assist his fellow beings on the path towards Enlightenment. This is the wonderful Mind of those who choose rebirth for the sake of others. Pemalingpa showed these Bodhisattva qualities, such as the Four Bodies of the Buddha, the Five Wisdoms, and the Thirty-Seven Attainments[81].

His coming was as prophesied by Guru Rinpoche; his activity as a saint encompassed both the Land of Medicinal Herbs, his native Bhutan, and many parts of the Himalayan world; and in the course of this he was shown devotion by, and gave teachings for, people ranging from ordinary lay folk to the most accomplished scholars and lamas.

The list of exceptionally highly regarded people who have recognised Terton Pemalingpa is long, and I have mentioned a few of them: such as his contemporaries the Lhalung Nangso, Thripon Tashi Dargyé, the Desi Rinpungpa, the Seventh Karmapa, Lord Drukpa Kunlé, Droshul Drodul Lethro Lingpa: also great later figures such as the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Drakpa, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo and Jamgon Lodoe Thayé.

However, it must be said that people such as Pemalingpa have, at all times in history, had their detractors. Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, too, was demeaned and slandered in his own time, in particular by the disciples Lhajin and Lekpé Karma, whose evil propensities and delusions blinded them to the radiance of their Master. Similarly

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81 The Thirty-seven Attainments: *byang chub gyi chos sum cu rtsa bdun.*

Guru Rinpoche had his enemies at the court of King Trisong Detsen, such as the Minister Tara Lugong who spread slander about the Guru and did all he could to obstruct him.

Pemalingpa has been and is revered by people all over the Himalayas; and his legacy is very widespread. There are various kinds of Terma: the Jewels or Holy Pills, the Material Treasures such as statues and ritual objects, and the Speech Treasures such as the texts. Pemalingpa brought forth all of these and they are well known throughout the Himalayan Buddhist world. According to Guru Rinpoche's prophecy, it is said that no-one can destroy his teachings, and that they will last for many aeons.

Now it has been thought by one scholar recently that Terton Pemalingpa fabricated and concealed the Termas himself, and that he cleverly deceived people all over Bhutan and Tibet. Such suggestions have been made without proof, and from the standpoint of a foreign world view; they have been made by disregarding Buddhist doctrines and without the trained experience which is necessary. By understanding the Buddhist doctrines correctly, however, what one could indeed say is that Pemalingpa deceived people *indirectly*. That is in a sense which is not the normal one as understood by outsiders. This is to say that his feats, exercised out of compassion, disturbed people from their lives and their duties, turning them towards the Dharma.

Miracles may have this function, as witnessed within many cultures. One could say that the everyday, samsaric world is itself like a deception, and that the only way to transform that world, to transform peoples' way of perceiving it, is to take them out of their deception, sometimes shocking them into a new perception of Reality. But for one who only sees and believes in the everyday world as real, such activity will naturally tend to be interpreted as a kind of trickery.

Ugyen Padma is the name of the one who concealed the Treasures; and Ugyen Padma the name of the one who revealed them. But the first is Guru Rinpoche, Ugyen Padma Jungné, and the second is Ugyen Padma Lingpa. Sometimes the difference between truth and deceit may seem equally small. It demands deep study as well as compassionate understanding in order to discern correctly.

Reality understood just as the samsaric world deceives us; and in another way, Absolute Reality, that which is beyond such categories, also deceives.

One can play with words, and say, "deceit is truth, and truth is deceit"; but one can only know by trying in practice. In other words, the Path is there for motivated people in order to lead them to a transmutation of the self; terms, doctrines or concepts such as those we use, are only like the steps on a ladder: they are purposive. Their composition or nature is, ultimately, secondary to the task of actual spiritual progress.

In its nature, the whole universe as we experience it is a process, in which conceptions, appearances, tendencies, constantly form and unform, fold and unfold around us in interdependence, in an apparent field consisting of objects of cognition and object-perceivers.

A deception, too, is such an object of cognition, and the one who feels himself deceived is such an object-perceiver. Thus is Samsara!

Pemalingpa like other Tertons revealed Treasures from many sites: thus some cliffs and lakes, that appeared to be ordinary phenomenal objects containing nothing special, were shown by Terton Pemalingpa to be deceptions.

Those beings who believe in Pemalingpa are said to be irrevocably set upon the way to Enlightenment, sure to reach it in time. By this is meant that once a true seed is planted in fertile ground, it cannot fail to grow.

In order to be freed of the delusions under which human beings constantly labour, that is desire, hatred and ignorance, it is necessary to deceive them: into faith, or out of their selves, or whatever one likes to say about it. Transformation is in essence, *a deception of what was.*

Mind becomes Truth, Thought becomes Divine Word.

The saints, such as Ugyen Pemalingpa, contemplate our delusion; then they delude us into contemplation.

So I, too, long to be 'deceived into truth' by Terton Pemalingpa.

COLOPHON:

I have written this book on the request of Dasho Rigdzin Dorjé and other dignitaries. They asked me to write a true biography of Terton Pemalingpa.

Thus it has been done by one who is from the monastery called Shedrup Dargyé Choling in Chumé in Bumthang, Bhutan; I was named Jigmé Namdrol by Doring Khyentul Jamyang Kunzang Lungrik; and I am also called Padma Tshewang.

I was persuaded to write this biography, although I am neither skilled nor worthy to undertake such a task. Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi contributed in various ways. This work has been done in order to avoid Terton Pemalingpa being misinterpreted in the modern world.

Thimphu, in the Iron Sheep Year.

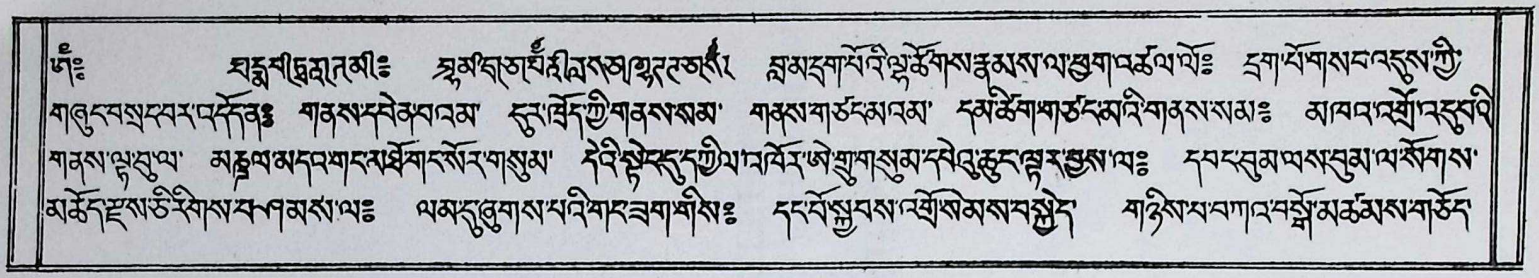
གཏེར་སྟོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་གཉེ་པ་བདུ་གྲིང་པ།

E. The fourth Sovereign Terton,
Pemalingpa

PART II

COMMENTARIES

by KHENPO PHUNTSHOK TASHI, CHRIS BUTTERS
AND SIGMUND K. SÆTERENG



F. 'Dakini script' letters, from the Lama Drakpo Terma (top line, left half)

G. 'Dakini' letters, from Lama Norbu Gyatsho (top line, left)

CHAPTER 1: THE WORKS OF PEMALINGPA

by KHENPO PHUNTSHOK TASHI*

Before taking a brief look at Pemalingpa's works, it may be useful to give here the accepted set of criteria by which the validity of Tertons and Terma are evaluated. These criteria are particular to although not exclusive to, the Nyingma school[1].

The following eight conditions must all be met in order for one to be recognised as a genuine Terton:

1. Great Body: auspicious signs and marks on the Body;
2. Great Speech: powerful Speech with accurate, definitive words;
3. Great Mind: Mind inseparable from the Dharmakaya, with complete in-sight into the oneness of all Phenomena and the Dharmakaya;
4. Great Education: learning and knowledge directed for the sake of others;
5. Great Concentration: skilled reception and understanding of many teachings, both of Sutra and Tantra;
6. Great Meditation: achievement of high contemplation, of Blissful Mind;
7. Great Courage: fearless ability to act to conquer adversity by Spirit;
8. Great Memory: great skill in retaining doctrines and in visualising deities.

These are conditions which are subject to long and careful appraisal by generations of lamas and scholars. Further, to be recognised as true Terma, a text must fulfil the following six Profound Conditions:

1. Profound Meaning: it should be in accordance with the Buddha's teachings in its Ultimate Meaning;
2. Profound Place: it should be revealed from earth, sky or water as intended;
3. Profound Protection: it should be protected until its revealment by the five kinds of special Protector;
4. Profound Time: it should be revealed at the appropriate time ;
5. Profound Authorisation: it should be accessible for, i.e. comprehensible to the destined person and no other;
6. Profound Counsel: it should be shown to protect and benefit its followers, and no harm ever to result from its practice.

Here, too, both careful analysis combined with the experience of generations, have confirmed the validity of Tertons like Pemalingpa. This is not true of all Tertons and Termas: some have been disproved or rejected, over a period of time, as being false[2].

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* Translations with Chris Butters

1 These two sets of criteria are: *gter ston gyi mtshan nyid brgyad dam drug*, and are given according to Dudjom Rimpoche, *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism,* p.511.

2 The term for false Treasure is *gter rdzun.*

Since Terma teachings are regarded as being as precious as the Word of the Buddha, it is of greatest importance to verify their validity. As Eva Dargyay has written, "the starting point is the doctrine of Buddha nature..., of potential Buddhahood inherent in all living beings"; mastery of the subtle, essential life-force means mastery og the Mind, so that it carries the intellect as an elephant carries its rider[3].

So the above criteria, whilst being based on reason, are not firstly a matter of judgements by the intellect, but of "the inner development of the ability to see whole and intuitively: not only with the head, and not only with the view of the individual ego"[4]. It is easy to doubt, from an alien standpoint; but it is good to be able to appreciate that, as we say, fingers are not all the same length, that there are many worlds. It may be stated in an obvious-sounding way: real spiritual experience is the only way to gain insight into such issues.

What can be noted particularly about Terton Pemalingpa is that he was neither a monk nor a learned person to begin with. In such a case, it is even more extraordinary that he produced such a very large and varied body of writings. It is of course far easier for a learned monk to compose religious texts: but all, whatever the source, must stand the test of time and the combined scrutiny of many later figures of sincere spiritual insight. For Pemalingpa in particular, then, the evidence of what he produced is very important. One can hardly evaluate such a figure without considering closely what he actually produced: it would be like judging a cook by the way he looks, rather than tasting his food.

Firstly, some general remarks about the works of the Terton of Bumthang.

The *Collected Works* of Terton Pemalingpa run to twenty volumes, which contain a total of roughly 12000 folio sides. These works include both his Treasure Texts, which are about 80% of the total, and also works written by himself which are not Termas, such as his autobiography[5]. The texts which are Termas, that is the holy word of the Guru himself, can be identified by the special punctuation mark used between sentences, the *ter-tsheg*, as distinct from the normal *shé*[6].

These works were written down both by himself (the Terma texts often being transcribed in a trance state, as already noted), and some texts probably being dictated by him to scribes, a very common practice. A few were expanded by other people, on his instruction, such as the Treasure text written out by a scribe from Ura.

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3 Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism,* p.64-65.

4 Butters, 'Environment and Mahayana Buddhism', part 4.

5 The autobiography is in vol. *Pha*, fols.3-510, of the *Collected Works*.

6 See also Gyatso, "Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury", where she uses the alternative term *gter-shad*. The two forms, one with the two superimposed circles only and the other with a horizontal dash between them, are sometimes said to refer respectively to the Upper and Lower Treasure texts.

Some of the Terma texts, such as *Lama Norbu Gyatsho*, were widely propagated very rapidly. There is an original though damaged set of woodblocks (*parshing*) of his works, kept today at Kunzangdrak, which is said to have been carved by Pemalingpa himself - a tremendous feat. In 1976, a new edition of the Collected Works was published under the patronage of HRH Ashi Phuntshok Choden.

It is not known to us for sure whether pieces of original Terma scroll from Pemalingpa's finds still exist. Certainly some of the statues recovered as Terma do. This is the case with the finds of other Tertons, and such items are usually in the possession of lamas and monasteries of their lineage; they are naturally regarded as exceptionally holy relics.

One is amazed at the sheer quantity of Pemalingpa's works, as well as at the range of subjects dealt with. Whilst his own writings are mainly on subjects like liturgy, philosophy and ritual, the Terma texts include works on meditation, philosophy, astrology, biography, medicine; instructions for rituals; sacred dances; etc.

The texts for meditation and for certain rituals, as well as the dances, have become particularly widespread. They are especially but not uniquely popular amongst the Nyingma and Kagyu schools, and for activities associated with the deities Tamdrin Chagrel and Desheg Dupa, these two having been Pemalingpa's own tutelary deities.

It is said of Pemalingpa that the Deeds of his Body were of particular benefit in the Bumthang region, the Deeds of his Speech in southern Tibet, and the Deeds of his Mind in central Tibet; those of his Qualities were of exceptional value in the regions of Dakpo, Kongpo and Nyel, and those of his Activity have spread in all directions.

In all, Terton Pemalingpa revealed about thirty-four Termas, although the exact classification of the finds, texts and other objects, is problematical. The best known and most influential of the Termas are the following:

Longsel Sangwa Nyingchu,
Lama Drakpo,
Gyud Buchung,
these three especially widespread in the Kham region;
Lama Norbu Gyatsho,
Thugjé Chenpo Munsel Dronmé,
Chagrel,
particularly followed in Lhodrak, U-Tsang, Kongpo and East Bhutan;
Norbu Lamkhyer,
Nyingtik Mabu Chigdil,
best known in the region of Paro in Western Bhutan;
Kagyé Yangsang Thukimelong,
Chakdor Tumpoi Gyud,
followed especially in Central Bhutan.

Particular texts are revered in specific regions. This is both because the original revelation or initiations were done there, or because of definite prophecies by Guru Rinpoche concerning the Termas and the regions they were especially intended to benefit.

Amongst his sacred dances, the Peling Ging Sum is the most famous, being performed in many parts of the Himalayas. Within Bhutan, the Dramitsé Nga Cham is equally famous: part of this dance was received from him, and the remaining instructions were revealed at Dramitsé to his niece, Ani Chorten Zangmo, some years later (according to other sources, she was his sister). It is also said to be popular in Kham and central Tibet.

The texts are written in various styles: the autobiography in a simple language understandable to common people, the Termas in a more classical style of Choké. In Choké, the style changes somewhat according to the subject, and is less an individual matter than is the case in many languages.

To date, scholars have not to our knowledge undertaken much research on his writings. In the following pages, therefore, a few short texts are translated in order to give a brief look at the actual content of Pemalingpa's *Collected Works*. We hope that in the future more translation and analysis of the Works can be undertaken.

THE THUGJE CHENPO VISUALISATION[7]

The following short text is very popular, and in daily use in thousands of households. It is a short instruction in Tantric meditation for the Visualisation of Avalokiteshvara (Thugjé Chenpo or Chenrezig).

This text is not part of the *Thugjé Chenpo Munsel Dronmé* Terma itself but is one of the additions to it composed by Pemalingpa himself. Although such texts can be said to keep to fairly standard conventions, they all have variations of detail and style, and are considered more or less powerful.

The text is as follows:

Obeisance to the Great Compassionate One, Avalokiteshvara.

Those who wish for the teachings of Avalokiteshvara, must possess the true motivation to obtain them; and thus by meditation they may attain the unsurpassable vehicle of Great Compassion.

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7 Thugje Chenpo Visualisation': full title, *Bsgom bzlas gter ston gyi mdzad pa ldeb*, from the *Collected Works*, Vol. *Ja* fols.469-472.

In an instant[8], one is to visualise oneself as the lotus flower Padma. From this lotus emanates the holy letter 'A', which then transforms into the Moon Seat. Then the letter 'M' is visualised, transforming into the Sun Mandala.

This is the Threefold Seat of the Nature of Mind, the white syllable HRI.

On this Threefold Seat, then visualise the Self transforming into the White Avalokiteshvara, with one face and four arms; the upper two hands are joined in the palm gesture before the heart, holding a jewel; of the lower two, the right hand holds a crystal and the left holds the stem of a white lotus, the blossom of which reaches to near the left ear. Above the deity's coiled hair, Buddha Nangwa Thayé is seated.

Avalokiteshvara is attired with ornaments: crown, earrings, necklace, bracelets and anklets, a jewel sash across one shoulder descending to the level of the navel, and a jewel sash worn across both shoulders hanging to the level of the thighs; complete with upper and lower garments and so forth. The deity is dressed with many silks and jewels, and is seated in the cross-legged position.

Avalokiteshvara is to be meditated on like the sun shining on a snowy peak. At the heart is the white syllable HRI, upon the moon seat: this is the offering of the Noble Beings, as from this syllable, shining rays spread out to all directions. As they reimmerse into the seed syllable, Body, Speech and Mind are purified, and the obscurations of sentient existence are dispelled.

The syllable HRI is to be visualised encircled by the Six-Syllable Mantra, OM MA NI PAD ME HUM. The Mind should contemplate this, whilst performing the recitation of the mantra. Thus, as the rays of the mantra emanate in all directions, all phenomena transform into the Body of Avalokiteshvara. All sounds transform into the Six-Syllable Sound; all thoughts are dispelled and the only Awareness is that of the Great Emptiness.

If one meditates thus on the syllable HRI, all the obscurations of Body, Speech and Mind will fall away, and one will attain release from the sufferings of the Six Realms. One may attain the Buddha-state of Avalokiteshvara even within this lifetime: this is the power of the unsurpassable Avalokiteshvara Meditation with the Six-Syllable Mantra.

Composed by me, Pemalingpa, for the sake of the True Beginners on the Spiritual Path.

May the Teachings of the Diamond Vehicle and the Beings of all the Six Realms be benefited by this work.

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8 One should reach the stage of being able to visualise in an instant. An 'instant' (*skad cig*) is very short indeed; technically it is defined as one sixtieth of a snap of the fingers.

THE PELING GING SUM[9]

The following is taken from the Terma *Lama Norbu Gyatsho*, and is the text of instructions for the sacred dance Peling Ging Sum, which is performed at many sacred festivals. The name means Pemalingpa's Three Wrathful Deities; it is also known as Peling Ter Cham, which means simply the Treasure Dance of Terton Pemalingpa. The *ging*, who are represented with aggressive masks, are powerful, benevolent forces to dispel adversaries.

The three parts of the dance are as follows: first, the Stick Dance which is to locate and point out the Adversary; second, the Sword Dance to conquer and destroy it; and thirdly the Drum Dance, expressing the victory over the Adversary. In the translation of the text which follows, we have for the sake of clarity added a few phrases about the dance movements; these are in brackets.

Obeisance to the Body of the Tantric Holder Padma.

Whenever the Tantric Drupchen ceremony takes place, demonic obstacles are to be dispelled; if not, negative atmospheres will disturb the powerful attainments which the Drubchen is to create. Thus in order to dispel evil forces, all the Vajra monks must put on the costume of the sacred Ging dance. Before performing the expulsion of interfering adversities, they must make an image of the Enemy, of earth or of flour. This image is to be set up in a triangular box to the south of the Mandala.

Below is described the way of destroying the image of the Demon, and the way of dancing. First the *Juging*, the Stick Dance, is to be performed. It has seven sequences. Next comes the *Driging*, the Sword Dance, in seven sequences: the third is the *Ngaging*, the Drum Dance, also with seven. By dancing these twenty-one sequences, the adversaries will be destroyed.

Firstly the *Juging*, as follows.

One: the drum beats once, the dancers indicate (with their sticks) where the Enemy is. The ends of their sticks are then pointed to the other directions, and with a jumping movement they encircle the Mandala (of the dance ground).

Two: as the drum beats thrice, the pointing movements are repeated thrice, and the sticks are turned to the right side and the left side alternately.

Three: when the drum beats thrice, with a short pause, (looking around for the Enemy), the leader of the dancers beats his dagger on his right shoulder and then on his left, with a twirling movement of the torso. (The others follow suit, and) according to the drum beat the gesture of the steps is alternately to the right and to the left.

Four: the drum beats thrice, the sticks are first pointed to the sky and then down to (touch) the ground, and this alternately to left and right, in time with the steps.

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9 Peling Ging Sum': from the *Lama Norbu Gyatso* Terma, *Collected Works* Vol. *Kha* fols. 931-935.

Five: the drum beats thrice, with a second pause now; (then) one beats the sticks to left and right shoulder, with two *lejags*. Then the sticks are thrust forward six times (in the air), together with the steps.

Six: the drum beats nine times; as the *lejag* changes, the dancers move in a circle, inwards and outwards.

Seven: the drum beats thrice, the tops of the sticks are waved in the air, to right and left, with a throwing gesture. Then the dancers move away, running, and demonstrate by acting the Sky *ging*, the Intermediate *ging* and the Earth *ging*, respectively.

Then comes the way of dispelling the adversaries. The leader of the dancers and the last, grasp hold of the black and white robe on which the image of the Enemy is lying: they take it up and carry it into the centre whilst the others encircle the Mandala. Then it is put back on the south side of the Mandala again.

After this comes the *Driging*:

One: the drum beats, and the dancers running show the sharp tips of their swords outwards to all directions; next they show the tips to the sky, (holding the swords near the tips); then they run (four or five steps, from the Adversary) with jumping movements.

Two: the drum beats thrice, with one *lejag*. (Holding the swords at both ends), they turn them up to the sky, then stab down earthwards, whilst their movements are to right and left alternately.

Three: the drum beats thrice, with two *lejags*, the swords are beaten twice on the ground to the right and left of the box (where the Adversary is): then the dancers take three paces forwards.

Four: the drum beats seven times; the dancers (pause, then they) swirl their bodies around rightwards, (in the same movement) bending and putting the sword tips to the earth. In between the turning of the *lejag*, the sword tips are pointed to the sky.

Five: the drum beats thrice, the dancers gyrate to left and right, then move running with the gesture of throwing (the swords).

Six: as the drum beats nine times, the swords are turned above the image of the Adversary, and are then struck down into the Adversary's heart. The heart is then taken up (on the swords) and thrown to the sky.

Seven: the drum beats thrice, the swords strike (in turn) the forehead, neck, stomach, back and sexual organs (of the Adversary): this is repeated six times, then the dancer splits the four limbs of the demon, and after splitting the body, it is thrown to the four directions. Following the drum beats, all the pieces of the body are then thrown out with the 'three style' dancing movements.

Then comes the *Ngaging*.

One: the drum beats once: the dance movement is one of jumping whilst the dancers encircle the Mandala.

Two: the drum beats twice, the dance continues whilst the dancers' movements are to the left and to the right with the *lejag*.

Three: the drum beats thrice, the dancers encircle the Mandala whilst their bodies turn alternately to the left and to the right, during the movements also bending down to the ground and raising their backs up straight three times. Then (by pairs) the dancers touch front to front and form a circle. Changing the direction to right and left twice, they then show the Sky *ging*, the Intermediate *ging* and the Earth *ging*.

Four: the drum beats thrice, the dancers form a line and pace their feet to the right and then to the left, then to the front and to the back, whilst moving to left and right.

Five: the drum beats thrice, the movement is one of going slowly and being moved around to the right and left, with steps (then) to the front.

Six: as the drum beats thrice, they move forward and throw their legs to the back and to the front alternately. This time they put the hand-drum under their thighs, whilst running forwards.

Seven: the dancers touch back to back, leap towards the sky (and bend down;) then the drum beats towards the earth. By forming a long line the Mandala is now encircled.

The sequences must be followed as above up to the total of 21, and then again the Sky, Intermediate and Earth *ging* must be shown (with the drum sticks). In between the sequences, make pauses for some while and dance in turns. Then finally, encircle the Mandala again, and sound the drums in praise for the Deities, beating nine times and doing the movements of an eulogic dance. After the praises, the music should end with pleasing sounds (by the accompanists).

This sacred dance for destroying all interfering obstacles is intended for the benefit of all Beings in the future. It was made by me, Padma Guru Rinpoche, and concealed under the jewel ground, with the prayer that the text should meet with a Heart Son.

I, Pemalingpa, revealed this from Lhodrak Mindo.

The dance with its elaborate costumes is performed thus to this day, and presumably much as it first was performed by Pemalingpa himself: though today, some details are difficult to explain. For example it seems hard to ascertain exactly what is meant by the term *lejag* ('gesture of blessing'?). The above text may not appear as a sufficient set of instructions for a dance; but one must remember firstly that many of the dance conventions were well established and do not need full description; secondly, that the text was supplemented by Pemalingpa's demonstrations and oral instructions.

Sacred dances of Vajrayana such as this one, are not to be seen as rituals for exorcising evil spirits: although the origins of the tradition as a genre may well lie in shamanistic practices. The dance must be seen in terms of the Mandala: for the dance ground itself is considered as a Mandala, symbolic of the forces within the psyche, there being Mandalas of many types representing particular deities or psychic forces.

The dance has thus, on the physical or 'Body' level, a function analogous to verbal or 'Speech' liturgies, which are also at times conceptualised in terms of Mandalas, and those are in turn analogous to meditation practices based on the Mandala on the level of 'Mind'.

So the function of the dance - both for the actors and the spectators - is one of concentrating the Mind and of releasing it from the obscurations of the Senses. Its meaning is an inner meaning; and the dance will have no effect unless those involved effectuate that process within themselves.

The Drupchen festivals are a little special in that they are seen as constituting a collective process, where all present have to be involved, in harmony, creating collectively the atmosphere and the concentration necessary for achieving a particular result, that is the specific form of spiritual progress associated with the Drupchen's presiding deity.

THE JEWEL GARLAND THAT ILLUMINATES THE MEANING[10]

The following excerpts are from a text which is a kind of informal discourse on principles of Madhyamika philosophy, and Pemalingpa apparently died without completing it. It is written in classical Choké style, not highly stylised but in a personal and down-to-earth tone, and filled with short quotations from leading Buddhist philosophers. He begins his text by noting when and where he wrote it, which is unusual since by custom Buddhist authors almost never mention their own names except in the colophons of their works. Rather than showing pride, it is perhaps a sign of his unconventional and straightforward nature, of a person not too concerned with outward form, as in the text itself, where he says that his words are those of a simple man, probably of little interest for learned scholars but intended for ordinary people. This is a conventional expression, too, but it rings true in the uncontrived way in which he elaborates on the point. Here, we translate the first sections only, i.e. about ten out of a total of twenty-eight folio sides.

Namo Ratna Guru Bhya! To you, great Lord of the Four Kayas and of all sentient life: revealer of Liberation's way, crowning ornament of my awareness: to the Root, the Lineage Holders, the Lamas all, and also to the Yidams and the Dakinis; to all these, I make my obeisance.

Consider the Word of the Buddhas, the Accomplishments of the wise ones: in former generations, truly the full meaning was manifested. Now, though one such as I am unable to express it as it should be, yet for ordinary people I may be able to convey this gem of bright meaning. So, like a jewel garland I shall write down my explanation.

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10 The 'Jewel Garland': *Bstan bcos don gsal nor bu'i phreng ba*: *Collected Works* Vol. *Pa* fols. 461-492.

Of religion in general one can say that its inner meaning and significance are revealed by practice; that is, only through religion itself. As regards words and explanations, there is both the Speech of the Buddha, and there are Commentaries, these two; this text is a Commentary.

The structure of my text will be according to the fivefold division, the order of which is as follows. First comes the Basis or foundation upon which the explanation rests. Second comes the explanation of the Root to which the text belongs. Third, there is the Title itself, through which the main meaning is made clear so that you will be able to comprehend the purpose of the text. Then, since the real purpose - for you as for others - is to understand fully, in one's whole being, comes the Path; that is, the way of understanding which is practice itself. And, from beginning to end, the explanation should be in Detail, without omission; this is the fifth part.

I shall explain first my Basis for this text. Some people may say that it is not right for unqualified persons to compose such Commentaries; and that, even should they do so, it will be nothing more than their own small opinions, unlikely to be of any value for others. Since some people may talk thus, I wish to state that it is not for highly learned people that I write, but for those who want to start on the path of religion, and for those who are on a simple level of understanding like myself. For these, it can be useful. As is said in the *Bodhicaryavatara*: "For others on the same level as I, reading this may reveal profound meaning". Shantideva wrote this.

There are people who criticise the Commentaries in various ways; and the same is true of the Buddha's Word itself. Thus in the *Ngonpar Jungwé-do* we read: "This may be demeaned by critical scholars..."; and so on. Still, it may be that my own unqualified comments are not satisfactory for some readers, so for them I shall also quote lama Rigrel's text, the *Domsum*:

Treasure texts, Buddha Word, Transmission by Ear,
The Baskets Three, the Tantras Four,
If a text be like these, little matter the source;
But if the meaning is different, then error is clear.

So it is said. And on the issue of qualifications, or lack of them, we can likewise reflect on these words of Berotsana:

Learn even from a child, be his words wise and true;
Put aside a Buddha's words, be they meaningless for you.

That was his view. Perhaps then, some people can gain insight through this text of mine. Sakya Pandita voices the same thought:

Even from a child can truths be received,
Even great scholars may learn from these.
How could there be wisdom, without wide learning;
Were it thus, there would be no Wheel, and no turning.

So it follows that we should try to express ourselves with courage, and with commitment, and the result will be both right and in accordance with our capabilities; and in this way, we nurture links with our coming lives.

Sakya Pandita describes this as follows:

A man should seek knowledge, though tomorrow he may die,
And in this existence, he may not become wise,
Yet the harvest of learning cannot be untied;
Thus his wealth is returned in his future lives.

Again, some might say that even should one want to compose texts, the mastery of syntax, style and so on is just too difficult. But Sakya Pandita says: "Though there are many dense forests, true sandalwood trees are rare". And of those who are prone to criticising, he says: "People who themselves do not have the qualities of education, are always envious of those who have".

Further, we can turn to sources which some may consider even more authoritative, such as the *Drimé* Tantra:

Many Buddhas, many Minds, many Paths can be named
In the Vehicles Three, yet they are all the same;
And within this One Vehicle are all the Fruits contained.

Thus it is said. So, the profound and holy counsel of our school of thought is: of Word and Meaning, these two, Meaning comes first; I shall explain fully in the medium of Words, but it is always the attainment of the Meaning itself that needs to be stressed most. This is for the following reasons. Berotsana states it thus:"Words andsentences are as endless as the sky; but when you have grasped their root, that is, the Meaning, then the words themselves become unnecessary. Indeed, in reality it is not the words you should be concerned with grasping, but their root itself, which is the Meaning. The light of Meaning is made to shine by Words; where you fail to grasp the meaning of things, words can help to show you".

On the other hand, some people consider that if you do not have great accomplishment yourself, you cannot bring forth anything really meaningful for others. But a true, kind Mind cannot do otherwise than to be helpful towards others. In the words of Guru Chowang:

Whatever the level of your understanding may be,
Help ever your fellows towards the Way;
In this never falter, from helping your kind;
Do what you can - just this is Bodhi Mind.

And similarly the *Lhamo Drima Medpé-do* says: "Whoever attains through devotion to a true understanding of Lord Buddha's Speech, and thereafter sets down their thoughts, there shall true Meaning shine forth".

So, briefly: though I have neither the great accomplishments, nor the grace, nor the power for helping others, I keep on towards the goal, for the sake of spiritual progress. Chojé Zhigpo says: "To perfect your Visualisation, you must wander in the empty valleys; to perfect your Meditation, it is on the solitude of hermitages that you must rely; to perfect your Wisdom, you should compose Commentaries". And that is why I have written in the traditional manner of the Buddha's Speech and the Tantras, and have cited these quotations, which all have the same sense, briefly in this first part.

Now to the second part, concerning the tradition to which this text belongs. From the point of view of the Tantras, it is to be understood as belonging to the Yoga class of Tantra teachings, as well as to the Mahayoga class. Since that which is Visible and that which is Empty are, in essence, the same, it should further be added that, from the point of view of the nine Vehicles, this Teaching belongs to that of the Atiyoga vehicle. It addresses that which is beyond the reach of concepts, the reality of Emptiness. For in accordance with my own understanding and spiritual experience, this is the path to which I belong. Relying on Tantra and true sources, I have kept faithfully and honestly to this interpretation.

The following lines, then, will treat briefly in verse form, of Samsara and Nirvana, of their fruits, and of the difference between them.

For practitioners of religion, in this degenerate age, I speak here about joy and sorrow, and about cause and effect: hear, then, without letting your attention waver.

Though by the grace of our past efforts we have gained birth into this human world, yet by the power of karmic background we wander aimlessly in Samsara if we are without Dharma. By force of ignorant illusions, we commit all kinds of bad deeds; in the grip of anger, we expend our life force. Where we were born before, we don't know; and how can we know to what future existence we are bound?

Borne across into the Bardo, the Intermediate State after death, how shall we feel, alone in that strange world - if we think of it carefully, won't our hearts be pounding with fear? Though you may be laying up your store of food now for the coming year, who is there who can swear to you that it is not to be this year, the year of your dying? And when death comes, none can then be of help; wandering in the Bardo world, even those closest to you are powerless to come to your aid. Even now when you are alive, your selfish heart recoils from giving away so much as a begging-bowl of rice: yet when you're gone, others will take your wealth without as much as a word of thanks. Afterwards, very few of your close friends will even have a thought for you, born into the world of the Hungry Ghosts, where the hunger and thirst are unbearable, beyond description.

Whilst you are alive, your power and riches accumulate, and you seem to be enjoying happiness: yet your bad Karma is bound to catch up with you. When you die, even wealth can provide you with no help at all.

So you must become aware of the uselessness of all these things.

(...) As the sensory faculties fail and breath ceases, then due to ignorance the very elements become enemies; in the flat wasteland of unknowing, you will find yourself travelling alone. In the Bardo no contentment is to be found; there is no-one to accompany you; whatever appears, arises as your enemy. Due to your negative propensities, the many visions will be terrifying, as you wander in the hell where all is the sound of wailing. Unbearable torment will afflict you: with no Protectors, your bad Karma will have come to fruition. Then even clear thinking will be unable to assist you; for all Karma must, inevitably, be fulfilled. Supplication to the Lord of Death will go unheeded.

And even if you should be reborn, without Dharma this suffering will come repeatedly to afflict you, over and over. So, you must think carefully about these conditions and act rightly now.

In the above second part I have illustrated the afflictions of Samsara. Thirdly, I come to the Title and why I chose this appellation, the Clear Light That Shows the Meanings.

Now, I am viewing Samsara and Nirvana according to the way of the Pitakas, as well as according to the Tantras, and the experience borne of Practice - these three: for the significance of these matters is revealed through practice of religion.

Concerning the Teachings, Berotsana has the following to say:

Listen to many, collect few;
Assemble all, but confuse none.

King Songtsen Gampo said:
Do not sit proudly with high-sounding knowledge
But move, into the path of the Twofold Truth.
Do not think of schools or factions in Dharma;
But realise that they are all, eternally, one.

And our Lord of Orgyan says: "One may know all about the Doctrine and the Precepts, yet without confirmed Practice, not realise any Meaning at all". So I shall now continue, in verse, to expand on the above.

The natural, innate state of things is, indeed, Emptiness. There is a very great difference between understanding this and not understanding it.

This is the wonderful, all-good, unconditioned nature within all things; it is unmoving, but it reflects at every instant the multitude of flowings, of phenomena, around us.

This manifold, ever-moving world of appearances, how many impressions it can contain within each instant! Yet nothing can contain or hinder all-powerful Wisdom. So those who really understand this Quietness of the worlds are undisturbed; they just let the flow of phenomena be, just as it is. That is all, that is everything.

In the Yoga disciplines, there are many positions and methods of breathing and so on; and the results of skill in meditational practice can be talked about at length. But whatever happens, it is in the state of the non-grasping Mind, in that state of awareness that one should abide.

To be aware, of your own accord, of that innate realm which is your quintessential secret, and to develop an unwavering and steady Mind; this is the sphere of accomplished Insight. To be undisturbed by both Appearances and Emptiness, this is the sphere of true Meditation. To be without ego, not-aligned, not belonging, this is the way of divine Being. And to realise fully the non-createdness of Phenomena, this is the Fruit.

To let consciousness flow just as it is, without grasping at things, is the Liberation and Attainment of the true Siddha. To become pervaded by the essence of Emptiness is the Accomplishment of the true Visualiser. To let the natural flow of things alone is the way of the Conqueror of all evils; to open the Treasures of the Mind is the skill of the true Scholar.

So he who perceives the non-arising both of Emptiness and of Appearances, is not other than the Dharmakaya; he in whom the nature of Emptiness abides firmly, is not different from the Sambhogakaya; and he who acts for others, without self or attachment, is the Nirmanakaya, the very Buddha manifest.

If this non-action is rooted within you, then you are Innate Nature as it already is. If your inspiration is your own, inner Clear Light, you are the Lama; if you know all Phenomena as aspects of the Divine, you are the Yidam. If your Mind holds the Bliss of Emptiness, you are the Dakini; and if you are fully beyond ego, pure, in Emptiness, then you are the Protector of the Dharma...

The above is the first part of this text, which continues with reflections on existence, on wrong views, and on the concept of Great Emptiness. The fifth section then forwards advice as to the path and practice of religion.

THE "DESTROYER OF DOUBTS"[11]

The following passages are taken from a work whose full title is "The Doubt-Dispelling Questions Concerning All Dharmas, the Destroyer, Great Soaring Eagle". It is a philosophical discourse, again composed by the Terton himself.

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11 The 'Destroyer of Doubts': *Chos thams cad kyi gegs sel dri ba kun 'joms khyung chen lding ba*: *Collected Works* Vol.*Pa* fols. 545-580.

We should note that it follows the classic form of dialectical argument used in Buddhism, investigation of the nature of things following the fourfold pattern of Nagarjuna (this, that, both, neither...). The aim is to demonstrate the absurdity of all positions derived from logical reasoning alone. This style of argumentation requires some familiarity with the genre, since certain positions are sometimes not stated explicitly but taken as understood. We have therefore added a few phrases in brackets. The following are short selected passages from this text[12].

(1: Of Appearances and Emptiness)

First let us enquire concerning the concepts of Appearances and Emptiness. Consider the primordial state of nothingness, before beginningless time; did Appearances then arise out of Emptiness, or does Emptiness, rather, follow upon Appearances?

If Appearances arise out of Emptiness, then what are the conditions of this arising; what is the manner of this process? In what manner, in what time and circumstances does it occur? We say that Object-Appearances exist today, and so does Emptiness: but in that case, why then are new Appearances, new things and objects, not being produced today, continually, (out of that Emptiness?)

Or on the other hand, if Emptiness derives from Appearances, then why are today's Appearances not producing Emptiness continually? Is this Emptiness being formed all the time, how can this second assertion be?

Consider fire, water, earth, air, the manifest elements. When they came into being, what were the causes and conditions, what time and occasion produced them? If all things were formed from a kind of basic core, which is Emptiness, then that core must still be existing. Once there were no elements, (then they arose out of Emptiness); it follows that five new ones should be able to arise now too (since that all-creating Emptiness still exists). But this assertion, how can it be?

Let us consider instead the following. Appearances and Emptiness, are they two different things or are they one? Firstly, can they be the same? Emptiness is invisible and all-pervading, Appearances are visible and ever-changing - how then could they be one? But secondly: if we propose that they are not the same, (how could that be either?); if all visible things are not parts of Emptiness, where do they then come from: if not from the invisible, all-pervading core of Emptiness, how could they acquire form...?

(2: Of Relative and Absolute Truth)

Let us consider first whether Relative and Absolute Truth are one and the same in origin. If that were the case, how then could it have happened that they have become two? Or if they are, rather, two different things, then from what cause and under what circumstances did Absolute Truth first arise and, similarly, what is the source of Relative Truth? (These cannot be shown either).

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12 The four positions of Nagarjuna are: *yod pa, med pa, gnyis ka, gnyis med*.

(...) So let us ask further, whether Relative Truth is dependent on or derives from Absolute Truth. If it does, then what shall we do with it, what use is it, this Absolute Truth - for however we look at it, it is then nothing more than a kind of inner core of Relative Truth! How, then, can we assert that Relative Truth derives from Absolute Truth?

But can we consider instead that it is Absolute Truth which derives from Relative Truth? Since, (as we know), all errors and illusions belong to the domain of Relative Truth, then when we try to understand the concept of Absolute Truth, our search will lead us back to Relative Truth (since Absolute Truth derives from there). So in this case too, what use would there be for Absolute Truth? We cannot, either, assert that Absolute Truth derives from Relative Truth. Whichever we say derives from the other, both positions are shown to be absurd.

(3: Of Buddhas and Sentient Beings)

Let us enquire next regarding Buddhas and Sentient Beings. Have these two one and the same source, or not?

Can it be that they arise from one and the same source? Buddhas on the one hand are completely undefiled by Samsara; Sentient Beings on the other are defined by ego and attachments. The idea that they have a common source seems impossible.

Can they be different, then? If so, firstly, where do the Buddhas come from? If there is no place of their arising (to be found), shall we consider something to have come out of nothing? How is it then that the successive Buddhas have indeed come into being? Can we even be sure that the Buddhas have existed?

But if (we admit that) the Buddhas have indeed come from somewhere, then where is their cause? What is the time and manner of their arising? How can we take this position, either, that they have a cause and an arising? The Sutras, the Tantras, all the sources (on the contrary) tell us: primordial Buddhahood has no cause. So our assertion is contradicted by every authority.

Then what about Sentient Beings: what is their source? (Firstly, can we say they have no cause? Then they could not exist): yet flesh and blood appears, so how could this be? They do appear, successively born and dying, and certainly we cannot assert their non-existence; again, something cannot come from nothing, so saying that Sentient Beings have no cause is as if we should consider all the sources to be in error. But secondly if there is indeed a cause for the coming into existence of Sentient Beings, then we have to ask: where is this cause, and the time and manner of this arising, what is it? (They cannot be found, either; so) we are equally unable to demonstrate how Sentient Beings do exist.

Now, (even if we assume some cause behind things) we may ask whether Buddhas and Sentient Beings have the same cause, or whether the causes are not one but different. Let us consider whether Buddhas and Sentient Beings can be subject to the same

conditions. Buddhas appear for the sake of Sentient Beings, coming into existence by perfect Grace; whilst Sentient Beings are born in bodies of flesh and blood, caught up in the samsaric world of attachments and suffering. With these two attributes, how can their causes be the same (as for the Buddhas)? In the case of the Buddhas, there is no samsaric attachment; in the case of Sentient Beings, they are not enlightened. Two fruits cannot come from one seed.

Or, (if we propose that there must be different sources for each:) if the Buddhas have a separate source, then since Sentient Beings are, by definition, possessed of attachments and suffering, there would be no point in striving for Buddhahood; (if we are the fruit from that core, we can not become the seed). How can we think about this? If we consider, thus, that the Buddhas have a separate source, then what connection could there ever be between them and us?

And similarly, can it be that the cause and origin of Buddhahood is to be found in Sentient Beings? Given the temporally confined defilements of the Sentient state, no amount of striving could produce the attainment of Buddhahood. If it were like this, then it would be incorrect to consider Buddhas as enlightened Beings; (either Sentient Beings are really without defilements, or else Buddhas are not really free of them).

(4. On Dzogchen: Basis, Path and Fruit)
(These three are the essential stages of the spiritual journey).

Another question is the following: can one err by going wrong at the Basis, or does error arise along the Path?

Can error occur as to the Basis itself? If a seed should be scorched by fire, how could any fruits come from it? Surely, if error were possible at the Basis itself then despite all efforts no Fruit could ever be forthcoming.

Can one, then, make an error as regards the Path? If ever the shining rays of Wisdom and Grace should cease, then the attachments of the samsaric wheel would be the very starting point! (In other words: it is impossible, for on that samsaric circle, as on any circle, there is no starting point: the starting point leading away from the circle - or rather, 'enlightening' the circle - is the Path; once one is in the 'Grace-landscape', genuinely embarked, though paths are many, no error is possible). Thus, it is incorrect to assert that error can arise during the stage of the Path. (If that were the case) whatever one might do, again no fruits could be forthcoming.

If it were thus, all three of the parts would be without sense. The Basis would dry up, the Path would be lost, the Fruits would be as destroyed by a hailstorm. The purificatory functions of the Path would cease to exist, and the Fruits, which are the Three Kayas themselves, could never appear. Can there, then, be any error at all, in any of the three stages?

(So now, if we go on and assert that) there can therefore be no error as to the Basis or the Path, these two; yet, though all Sentient Beings have the Basis and the Path innate within themselves, by force of delusion they wander in Samsara. What does this mean? It means that we cannot possibly assert that there is no error!

(5: Of the Nature of Mind)

Let us ask this: (when we consider) all the Beings that possess Mind, does this Mind have its own, intrinsic existence? If we say it does, then we imply that Mind must be permanent. But if so, where are Mind's causes to be found? And since all the sources assert that Mind is not-born, not-created, are they then all false?

Or if we say on the other hand that Mind does not have intrinsic existence, then it is as if to say that something can come from nothing (-since we all know that Mind is the source of things). If this Mind could have its existence without any foundation at all, then indeed things would look bad: fruits with no seed! So how can we assert that Mind is without intrinsic existence?

Either way, we cannot maintain our arguments; both the hypothesis that Mind is permanent and the hypothesis that it is evanescent are untenable.

(The third proposition, 'both-and', is already implicitly refuted in the above). What then, lastly, if we assert the proposition that Mind is neither self-existent nor non-existent? In that case, the Minds both of Sentient Beings and of the Buddhas would be independent of any cause. Being unable to find any cause or effect at all, we can not maintain this proposition either.

Without relying on the Buddha's Speech and the Tantras, it is impossible to know or define the Mind. Is Mind Buddha-nature, or is it of the nature of Sentient Beings? If it is Buddha-nature, firstly, then there would be no need of spiritual striving; for the Buddhas do not know suffering. But what could all this Samsara be about, then? We cannot hold such an opinion. What then, secondly, if Mind is of the nature of Sentient Beings? (In that case, our concern about) the passions and attachments of Sentient existence would be useless for, try as we might, (with such a Mind) the enlightenment of Buddhahood would be out of reach. So how can we say this, either, that Mind is of the nature of Sentient Beings?

Thirdly, if the origin (and nature of Mind) lie (not in the one or in the other but) in both Samsara and Nirvana, then, since Samsara and Nirvana are different, Mind itself would be clearly composed of two different things. Just as physical bodies differ, so then Minds too would differ. How is it, then, (as all know), that Mind is of one essence? If the above proposition were true, then there could be no cause or fruits, indeed all the worlds could not be... (The fourth, 'neither-nor', proposition, is likewise untenable).

(6: On Meditation and Dzogchen)

A final question concerns Visualisation practices. Should one meditate on something or on nothing?

H. The first Recogniser, the Fifth Dalai Lama Lobsang Gyatsho

I. The second Recogniser, Chogyal Terdak Lingpa.

If our meditation is on something, then the objects of meditation are endless, infinite; whereas if we meditate on nothing, then our meditation is simply empty. This would be like the (view of the Chinese) heretic Ha-Shang - our Mind would be simply devoid of contents, of meaning, useless.

(The third, 'both-and' proposition is omitted as implicitly refuted). Or one might say that meditation should be neither on concrete subjects, nor on nothing. No; the meditation on something leads to a (non-dynamic) impression of permanency; the meditation on nothing leads to nihilism; and the attempt to include or exclude both, leaves us still firmly stranded in (the dualism of) Samsara. So now, let us take a look at Dzogchen.

Dzogchen is the inseparability of the (two aspects of the) dual grasping Mind, you say. Really? Indeed, this is the central point: what you are describing is no different from the state of an ordinary, deluded person in the Bardo! Meditations on things or on nothing, those propositions hold no promise at all. So let us really enquire as to Dzogchen.

When one meditates according to the way of Dzogchen, can there be any error at all? If there can be, then it would show that there is no real difference between Dzogchen and the lower Vehicles. Then as time passed, one would achieve no other results. If one assumes this, then Dzogchen is indeed not different from the lower Vehicles. In them, there are possibilities of error. If (on the other hand one claims that) error is not possible (in Dzogchen), then by just letting one's Mind flow, freely, with time the results simply cannot fail to appear.

So, if we assert that within the natural reality of Awareness there can be no error or divergence, that there can arise no differentiation, then (it also follows that) there is in fact no difference between the Upper and the Lower Vehicles. How can this be? Is there nothing superior and nothing inferior, really?

Indeed: for if you still see winners and losers, if you still see such distinctions, then you have surely not attained the state of Natural Awareness!

MUSICAL ANNOTATION[13]

Musical annotation in the Tibetan tradition is a fascinating subject upon which much research remains to be done. During rituals and ceremonies, musical accompaniment is seen as important at special phases of the prayers, such as during the invocation stage, the praises, and the prayers for well-being. The musical annotation follows standard basic conventions although they are subject to local variations.

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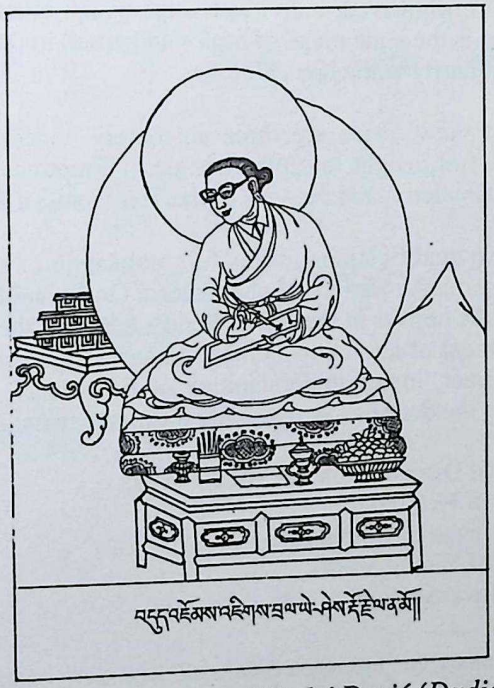
13 The musical score is from Pemalingpa's *Lama Norbu Gyatsho* Terma and Longchenpa's *Nyingtik* cycle, printed together in the popular prayer text '*Peling Yangyig*', *Snying thig dang pad gling gi dbyang yig dang gter dpe bcas* (Thimphu, undated).

J. The third Recogniser, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodoe Thayé



K. The fourth Recogniser, Jigtral Yeshé Dorjé (Dudjom Rinpoche)

Musical annotations are found in many ritual prayer texts, with indications for the voices and for some or all of the ritual instruments, including cymbals, drum, long and short horn, bone trumpet and conch.

In our illustrations, the voice incantation is shown by the wavy lines between and above the corresponding words. Below these are given the rhythms to be followed by the instruments, principally the cymbals which often play a defining role for the other instruments.

One of the texts shown here is the opening passage of the very widely used *Lama Norbu Gyatsho* Terma, revealed by Pemalingpa in Lhodrak. The musical accompaniment was not written, originally, but was taught orally by Pemalingpa and thereafter transmitted faithfully down through the years. It is said to have been written down, scrupulously according to the original instruction, by the lama Chodrak of Pemalingpa's monastery at Lhalung, at a time when he feared the correct transmission might become corrupted or lost. This seems to have taken place a long time ago, but we have not been able to ascertain the exact date.

To conclude this section, it may be noted that these excerpts from Terton Pemalingpa's works have been discussed with other scholars. They tend to agree with our own appraisal that, whilst not of the stylistic elegance of, say, a Longchen Rabjam, the writings are well and clearly formulated. They also note his simple mode of expression; that is, the uncontrived, individual voice which emerges from the pages of his works. Notable also is the wide range of topics addressed in the *Works*, as well as the Terton's extensive familiarity with classical texts.

In the Buddhist view, there are three absolutely necessary qualifications for authorship. These are: full insight into the doctrine of Emptiness; the authorisation of one's meditational Yidam deity; and mastery of the Ten Fields of Knowledge[14].

The first of these qualifications means full realisation of the nature of Absolute Truth, that is of the innermost meaning of phenomena. One who perceives phenomena in this way, as clearly as the objects in the palm of one's hand, is fitted to compose texts for the spiritual enlightenment of his fellow beings. As an example can be cited Nagarjuna, who possessed this direct, innate understanding of Emptiness. Thus inspired are his many commentaries on the doctrine, in particular these five texts:

- the Fundamental Discourse on the Middle Way,
- the Six Verses of Reasoning,
- the Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness,
- the Refutation of Wrong Views,
- the Thorough Investigation.

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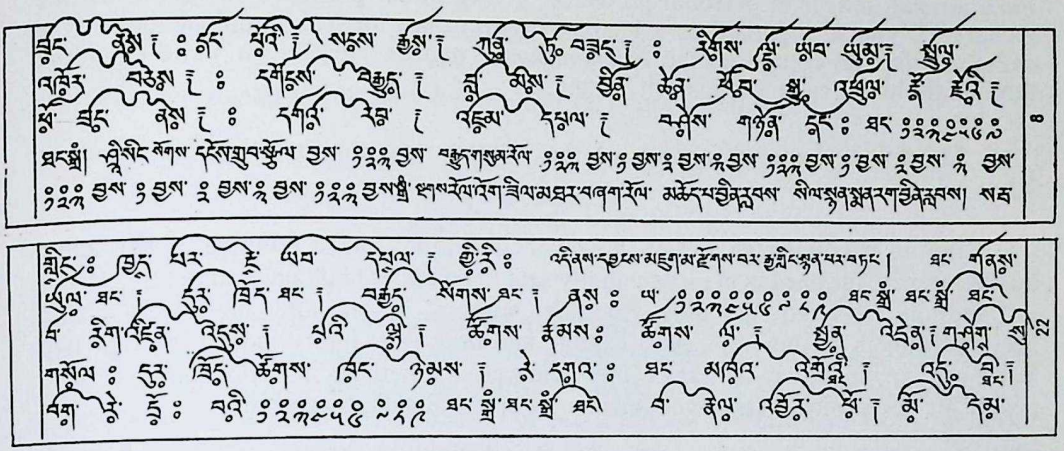
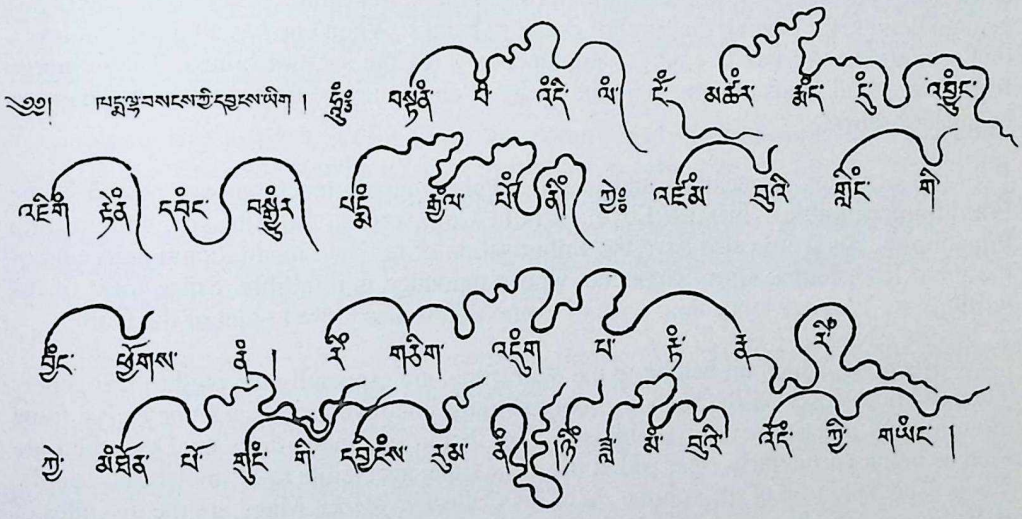
14 The Four Immeasurables are: *byams pa tshad med*, *snying rje tshad med*, *dga' ba tshad med* and *btang snyoms tshad med*. 'Ten Fields of Knowledge' is an alternative rendering for the Ten Sciences, see note 64.



L. Musical annotation for voice and instruments. From a text by Longchen



M. Musical annotation for voice, the Peling Yang Yig. From the Lama Norbu Gyatsho text

The second qualification is the authorisation which is conferred by one's meditational deity and personal protector, giving direct guidance for one's writing. Acharya Dignaga, regarded as a leading sage in questions of Buddhist logic, is an example; thus he composed the *Pramanasamuccaya* or Treatise on Valid Cognition through the authorisation of his deity Manjusri.

Thirdly is the qualification of the scholar who masters the Ten Fields of Knowledge[15].

Before becoming an author, however, one should have attained all the above qualifications. The third is in fact generally said to be easier to attain than the first two. It is generally believed that most Buddhist authors, in our age, have only partial accomplishment of this third qualification, and only very rarely indeed the first two. Some are experts only in the Five Minor Sciences, and perhaps in Philosophy; yet many people are composing texts and commentaries on the Buddha's teachings.

Terton Pemalingpa is considered as being beyond comparison with such authors. Master of all these qualities, his perception of the ultimate nature of phenomena was complete. Endowed with full realisation of Emptiness, his nature is said to be that of the exalted beings, far beyond the level of ordinary beings. When one has attained that level, one's thoughts and words emerge spontaneously for the sake of others. They emerge from Pure Mind. Thus too, one with the purity of an exalted being can never make errors or mislead others.

In intention, in meaning and in style, Pemalingpa's teachings are rooted in the Four Immeasurables: Infinite Love, Infinite Compassion, Infinite Joy and Infinite Equanimity. His words also have the authorisation of his own meditational deity and of the great Root Lama, Guru Rinpoche, whose guidance is infallible. Since most of his writings are Treasure texts, their style of expression is also close to that of the Guru.

His texts, which all belong to the Vajrayana, are especially devoted to Dzogchen. Though some describe the texts as being slightly unconventional, yet they give lucid directions to practitioners of Buddhism. The Terton's compositions on Dzogchen are seen as being particularly clear and at the same time, accessible to all motivated people: this is especially true of the volume *Ba* of his *Collected Works*. Many are the disciples of Pemalingpa who have attained Enlightenment; and thus it is that he has come to be accepted one of the greatest Revealers, unfolding the hidden treasures of Vajrayana for the sake of all humankind.

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15 These three qualifications are: *stong nyid mngon sum rtags pa*, *yi dam lha'i zhal gzigs thob pa* (or: *yi dam lha'i gnang ba thob pa*) and *rig pa'i gnas bcu la mkhas pa.*

CHAPTER 2: TERMA AND ITS CRITICS

by CHRIS BUTTERS

The Karmapa repeats what he said 500 years ago - nothing!

The emptiness in the seeing that is called Vision
transcends definition as something or nothing...
-Drukpa Kunlé[16]

Through the centuries, the tradition of revealed Treasures has, understandably, been controversial. The newer schools in Tibet sometimes saw it as an attempt to find spurious legitimisation; and at times, adherents of the Old School of the Nyingmapas as well as of Bon considered the Termas to be proof of their 'superiority'. However, since neither the Bonpos nor the Nyingmapas played central roles in subsequent Tibetan politics, these controversies were as often as not academic, and the various schools continued to accept each others' particular practices and variations on the Tantric theme. In addition their doctrines, rituals and daily life mingled and overlapped so much that it is hardly surprising to find many disciples of Terma teachings, as well as quite a few Tertons, amongst the followers of the New Schools.

Scepticism in more recent times has come mostly from the rational, academic camp. This is also understandable: it is always hard to believe in other people's miracles, which are by definition beyond the scope of rational explanation, let alone proof. The living cultural significance of such phenomena may hopefully not be greatly affected by extraneous scepticism of this kind; yet it is important to reflect upon the ways in which various writers and thinkers confront such issues.

The most recent critic of the claims of the Tertons has been Professor Michael Aris, whose 1988 book *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*[17] (hereafter referred to as *HT*) concludes that Pemalingpa and, as others have noted "by implication all the Tertons", were frauds and deceivers[18]. Much as we disagree, I think we should be thankful for the stimulation his book provided. The author is after all, only saying aloud what quite a few others may also think: and only by having it said openly can we begin to discern between misconceptions and real understanding, between naive credulence and constructive scepticism.

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16 Dowman and Sonam Paljor, *The Divine Madman* p.114.

17 Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*, op.cit.

18 See Ehrhard, p.206-207. His comment in full is: "Das abschliessende Kapitel nutzt Aris zu einem Resumee seines den gesamten ersten Teil durchziehenden Grundgedankens: Die von Padma-gling pa geborgenen Schatzwerke (und implizit alle Exemplare dieses Genre) sind bewusste Falschungen ... Konsolidierung seiner Macht ..."

It was Aris' expressed intention to bring to life the human dimension behind the life and works of the Himalayan Buddhist saint. Few are as well qualified to do this, since Aris is not only a respected scholar of Bhutanese history but an exceptionally fluent writer: and he has succeeded in creating a narrative at once engaging, very readable and well documented. His work opens up the fascinating topic of Terma to a wider readership. However, the section on Pemalingpa is unfortunately devalued by the author's attitude to miracles and to the "cult of treasure" in general, which he treats at once insufficiently and with open disdain.

Whilst I am taking *HT* as a focal point for this chapter, my intention is not to disparage one author: nor even particularly to defend the Terma doctrine against its sceptics. It is written for two reasons. Firstly, because *HT* by its very cleverness has apparently convinced some people who might have read the book with sharper eyes. Secondly, because the issues it raises – by both its strengths and its weaknesses – are so interesting, in the positive sense of the word, that they demand consideration and formulation.

My original notes on *HT* was written in English in 1990, and also circulated in a Choké translation in Bhutan. It received quite wide comments. Since then it has been much discussed and further modified. In its present form it is still rather polemic in tone. I wish to insist that this is not out of nastiness, but simply because the issues make for lively argument: and, one might add, the provocative and at times cheerfully irreverent tone of Aris' own book rather invite a similarly lively response. This is within the long Buddhist tradition of logical and epistemological debate; quite simply, his work has been a tremendous stimulation, and I am thankful for it.

Since the author of *HT* is an acknowledged authority on the history and languages of the Bhutan and the eastern Himalayan region, it came as a surprise to many people, I think, that his book on Pemalingpa presented a picture of the saint as a deceiver and a fraud. The Bhutanese Terton is of course a figure of national importance in Bhutan, and he is also an ancestor of the Royal Families. He is thus at the heart of a living culture.

Causing offence, however, may plausibly be justified. But a closer look at the book shows that it fails to fulfil the requirements of adequate understanding and insight. There might be a case to make against Pemalingpa, who knows. But this book certainly has not made it. No serious proof against Pemalingpa is given by Aris.

The more closely one looks at the figure of Pemalingpa in particular, the more implausible it becomes that this remarkable man could have been committing the voluminous and sustained fraud that Aris alleges. As is noted elsewhere in the present work, Pemalingpa produced about twelve thousand folios, and apparently won over most of his contemporaries, even though many were sceptical if not openly hostile towards his famous miracles. As the saying goes, it is not easy to fool all the people all the time. It seems no less reasonable to concede, surely, that something quite unusual may have been going on.

If we wish to understand better the human dimension of this historical but legend-enshrouded figure, then it is surely to his writings that we must turn; his voice is there.

It is worth noting that *HT* makes no examination of the actual works of Pemalingpa; they are listed in the bibliography but, apart from the saint's autobiography, only referred to in four notes, mainly sarcastic comments about the prophecy texts. Nor does the author refer to other great figures with whom he must be well acquainted, such as the Fifth Dalai Lama, who were ardent supporters of Pemalingpa[19].

Often during the long process of putting together the present work, I have found the Buddhists' philosophy seeming to creep up on me from behind. In this case, it is the notions of Relative and Absolute Truth or Meaning, which Padma Tshewang refers to repeatedly. Or, similarly, their insistence that attempts to disparage powerful saints cannot possibly result in harm but only in good.

For *HT* is, ultimately, far from valueless. On points of history and detail, it demands a genuine sharpening of the typical Buddhist scholar's attitude to research; whilst on points of doctrine, it demands a keen reexamination of one's own positions and knowledge. In addition, it stimulates reflection on the problems of the interface between cultures. Thus, while on the 'Relative' level its effects may be negative (it certainly makes it harder for foreign scholars to gain trust in Bhutan, for example), on the 'Absolute' level, it seems to have generated a great deal of positive effects, which would never have happened had the book not been written.

The View from Outside

Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives opens up fascinating and little known episodes of Buddhist history. It is an analysis of the lives of two famous Himalayan saints: Bhutan's Pemalingpa, and Tibet's Sixth Dalai Lama. The first section is about Pemalingpa, and it is here that the trouble arises. The second section is written in a different tone, considerably more sympathetic and also somewhat more detached. Since both tales are full of potential fraud, deceits and magical happenings, this contrast makes one wonder just why the author handles the two sections so differently.

If Aris is aiming a blow at those who have, as he nicely puts it, a 'Tolkienesque' love of things magical and paranormal from Tibet, then the target itself is fair enough; but that audience will hardly be reached by his book. On the other hand, if the aim is a serious look at the Terma tradition, then the book fails to reach that goal too. The section on Pemalingpa makes good reading: but it irritates, partly because of what is lacking, and partly because of the facile treatment given to basic Buddhist concepts. Combined with psychologising along the lines of Pemalingpa's fantasies all stemming from a difficult childhood...

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19 As noted by Padma Tshewang, the Fifth Dalai Lama was himself a Terton, and is accredited with twenty-five Termas, the *Gsang ba rgya can du gsal ba'i chos sde nyi shu rtsa lnga.*

"Whether one takes the view that Pemalingpa was a fraudulent and unscrupulous deceiver..."(p.15) The author of *HT* may be forgiven a theatrical opening gambit; the problem is that this is his own view, for which he forwards little evidence. He seems to have taken it for granted that his readers dismiss, out of hand, the notion of miracles of any kind, and proceeds from there. Buddhists would be quick to retort that No-Faith can be just as blind as Faith. Certainly in this case there is little difference, since the author's position seems to lead both to some misinterpretations of his source material, and to rather empty speculations.

The three main issues where the book sometimes goes astray, are on the questions of Pemalingpa's character, his lack of scholarship, and his alleged fraudulence.

Firstly, there is the question of Pemalingpa's character. Pemalingpa's autobiography, Aris suggests, shows that "he was far more concerned to establish which bodies he had occupied in his previous lives than to describe the ancestry of the family he was born into" (p.21). This sounds arrogant but is, simply, a known and established convention for such writings. Or: "there is little evidence that he ever tried to cultivate the Buddhist qualities of equanimity and dispassion" (p.63). Here the author overlooks the well-accepted variety of types of Buddhist saints; though he himself refers later to the 'mad saint' iconoclasts in support of his arguments against Pemalingpa.

Elsewhere, he quotes "almost the single expression of compassion" in the saint's life (p.69); which sounds damning but again seems a misunderstanding both of Buddhist methods and of the concept of Great Compassion. And we are given rather cheap comments like: "what he seems to have desired more than anything else was their universal acclaim"(p.63).

Another example shows how the scholar's own view gets in the way of things he must know about Buddhist doctrine. The saint on his deathbed makes many statements like "while I live there is no happiness... whatever wealth I have been given does not satisfy me... sicknesses will come". *HT*'s comment is "he had shown himself to be all too human in his dissatisfaction with the piles of gifts" (p.96). It shows nothing of the kind. The very first tenet of Buddhism is that "All is Suffering", as shown clearly by other standard phrases like "how I pity Sentient Beings". Pemalingpa is, surely, expressing basic Buddhist thought - not undue attachment to his bank balance !

One should add that no discussion is offered for the general reader of the nature and significance of these Biographies, the *namthar*, as a genre. On the one hand, it is widely accepted that they are often of limited value in the strictly historical sense; Pemalingpa's, though faulty chronologically, is perhaps an exception. However it is also recognised that a *namthar* usually has an inspirational as well as an instructive function, as "first and foremost a piece of Tantric literature"[20]. Thus one cannot in this genre demand what one would of a historical document in the scientific sense of the term.

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20 The literal meaning of *rnam par thar pa* is 'complete liberation'. For a discussion of the genre, see Willis, in: *Soundings*, p.304-319.

Then there is the question of Pemalingpa's lack of scholarship. This is recorded rather critically; yet episodes are related where the saint expounds sophisticated teachings, such as the Dzogchen doctrines, to other very learned people. It is hard to see how that would be possible without either profound studies, or else genuine inspiration of some kind.

Pemalingpa's autobiography is also described unflatteringly as "a flowing succession of incidents unpunctuated by longer reflection" (p.20). If Pemalingpa was indeed an unscholarly type, surely that is natural enough? But above all, what about his actual works? If he concocted them all himself, then there are twenty volumes of scholarly, or unscholarly, works to analyse and present to the reader. Not one example is given. We are told that the autobiography is written in very rough, common language; ("a kind of barbarous dog-Latin..."); but we are not told that the other nineteen volumes are mostly in confident, classical Tibetan.

If a Terton is indeed to be demasked as a fraud, at least one expects a close look at his texts. Are they of poor quality? Can one show places where they are obviously copied from other writers? Is there evidence that they were written for contextual purposes such as to flatter specific rivals or patrons? Aris does not even address the first two questions, and only raises personal suspicions about the third.

We read also that Pemalingpa's lack of scholarship "definitely sets him apart from what we know of all other Buddhist saints" (p.35). This is again supposed to indicate how little credible Pemalingpa's claims are. It is, however, quite simply not true. Other well known Buddhist figures have been unlearned, even illiterate[21].

Similarly, the saint's incarnation chronology is called "unconvincing", since there was a gap of fifty-five years between two of his incarnations. Aris adds: "Doubtless Pemalingpa would have had no difficulty explaining away this little problem..."(p.31). This kind of sarcasm is surely unfortunate. It is common knowledge that 'absences' of many years may occur between incarnations in the Tibetan tradition.

About the only real discussion of the saint's fraudulence, is a very poor page of psychology: "another possibility lies in the mind's infinite capacity for self-deception..."(p.62)

Buddhists might well agree that 'it's all in the mind', pointing to the doctrine of Emptiness; but that's on a more subtle level, one feels. C.G.Jung, who studied the psychological aspects of Eastern religions perhaps more than any other, seems to have anticipated just this when he wrote: "Naturally the simplest thing would be to relegate all those anecdotes to the realm of amusing fairytales or, if one accepts the facts as they are, to write them off as instances of self-deception. Another favourite explanation is 'auto-

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21 Cf. Dowman: "illiterate Tertons are not unknown": *Sky Dancer*, p.292, and similarly Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, p.*xxxvi*: "many of them were simple shepherds, hunters, pilgrims..."

suggestion', that pathetic white elephant from the arsenal of intellectual inadequacies..."[22]

Referring to miracles such as Pemalingpa's footprints in stone, the author offers us Pemalingpa's childhood training in stonemasonry as the solution to how Pemalingpa cheated. That could, possibly, be true, but it is hardly what one can call scholarly enquiry. Dozens of saints have left such marks; not only in this culture, for that matter. Fair enough, it may all be rubbish and autosuggestion; but who would suggest that all of them were trained stonemasons?

Witnesses Against Pemalingpa... or For?

Elsewhere in this volume the conception of proof in Buddhism has been noted. Whilst one may not accept the legitimisation processes of other cultures, what is surely at stake is to consider the internal consistency of such systems. Most writers seem to consider that the Vajrayana Buddhist metaphysics has a high degree of internal consistency. But even were it not so, the evidence of great contemporary figures has to be weighed in evaluating a person such as Pemalingpa. The omission of the Fifth Dalai Lama has already been noted; two other key witnesses have, I would contend, been rather misused.

The author of *HT* calls in several contemporary figures to support his attack on Pemalingpa (Pemalingpa himself records quite frankly that he had many critics, which is a plus for him and one would think, rather attests to his honesty). One of these is the well-known 'crazy saint' Drukpa Kunlé. The way Drukpa Kunlé is woven into the argument in *HT*, deserves our close attention.

First, Drukpa Kunlé is correctly described in *HT* as a "mad saint" and sceptic; one of the well known class of iconoclasts who insulted not one but every established authority; and on page 83 we are told that Drukpa Kunlé sang in praise of Pemalingpa after receiving teachings from the Terton. This doesn't last. By page 86, the *universal* sceptic Drukpa Kunlé becomes in the author's words "an unashamed sceptic *when it came to the cult of treasure*" (my italics): and by page 97, we find that he has become a chief witness for the prosecution: "... the opinion that he was basically a fraud... if they, with the radical and brilliant sceptic Drukpa Kunlé among them, were capable of holding that view, then surely the rational and critical scholars of the twentieth century can do so too".

By the time we've read that, the author has managed to weave a Kafkaesque plot whereby he ends up persuading us that Drukpa Kunlé considered Pemalingpa a fraud! Is the author deceiving us, or is this what he means by self-deception? It is an example of the need to read his book with sharp eyes.

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22 Jung: "Foreword to D.T.Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*", from: *Collected Works, Vol.11: Psychology and Religion: West and East*, p.544.

In passing, *HT* also says that "numerous later scholars of the reformed Gelugpa school" share that view. But no references are given, and neither does the author remind us that certain Gelugpa figures have themselves been Tertons. Nor does he elucidate the age-old rivalry on this point between the schools. Here again, one feels that essential contextual information has been omitted, and the omissions weigh, unfairly, against Pemalingpa.

A final example is the incident where Pemalingpa records how the chief Karmapa hierarch gave him no reply when asked to confirm or deny his saintly claims (p.77). *HT* takes the Karmapa's silence as a great indicator of Pemalingpa's fraudulence. We shall return to this point, for it is a very interesting misinterpretation. But the tale is also interesting for the fact that Pemalingpa tells it to us himself. That seems pretty honest for a fraud who is trying at all costs to conceal his deceitfulness.

One may be tempted to excuse this treatment of the Bhutanese saint as mere verbal insensitivity: for the introduction to *HT* states a more balanced case, saying for example that although some saints may have been frauds, "it is not unreasonable to look on them with compassion, sympathy, and even admiration... they did no harm... one could even argue that in a certain sense they became the people they pretended to be..." (p.5). But the picture then presented of Pemalingpa is so negative that the above excuse doesn't seem to hold.

The book is, at least, unbalanced. There is one lonely paragraph where the author concedes that Pemalingpa's legacy may, regardless of authenticity, be of great beauty and meaning. This is confusing after being told over and over that his works are cheap imitations cobbled together by an unschooled fraud.

Witness to the impact of Terton Pemalingpa is not only borne by the many figures quoted by Padma Tshewang, but also by the legacy of his teachings, which is considerably wider than Aris gives him credit for. Ehrhard[23], in addition to rightly querying the absence of the 5th Dalai Lama in the story, notes that Pemalingpa was for example the teacher of Chogden Gonpo, mentor of the king Nyida Drakpa of Gungthang in the southwestern Himalayas; Smith reminds us that Pemalingpa to a large extent integrated and revived the teachings of the Terton Dorjé Lingpa [24]. The *Nyingtik* cycles with which he and his former embodiments Padmaledreltsel and Longchen Rabjam are associated, were extremely influential and are very widespread to this day. Padma Tshewang notes other areas where his influence has been felt.

Buddha's Silence and the Trap of Interpreting

Let us return to the incident of the Karmapa's silence. Firstly, we may recall the precedent set by the Buddha himself, where he had kept silent, refusing to answer a questioner. He saw that the question was put with a clinging mind; clinging to the

23 Ehrhard, op.cit. p.207. The dates of Mchog ldan Mgon po are 1497-1543.

24 Smith, in: *Soundings*, p.x.

expectation of some hard and fast "truth", which thus meant that the man would be unable to hear a true answer.

Now this leads to all sorts of ramifications. The rational mind looks for an *answer*. It asks, what did the Karmapa mean by his silence? But the Karmapa, by being silent, makes us think for ourselves about the possible meaning, or meanings, of his silence. And there are many possibilities:

1. Perhaps Pemalingpa was indeed a fake and the Karmapa, knowing this full well, refused to pay him any compliments.
2. Or Pemalingpa asked for confirmation of his greatness, not for his own ego but in order that doubters might gain faith in him and thus become more serious followers of religion.
3. The Karmapa did not answer because he had already done so, by the act of inviting the Terton all the way from Bhutan and paying him deep respect.
4. The Karmapa thought that Pemalingpa was trying to test his insight, and his silence was a way of saying that he was above playing that sort of game.

These are only four possible interpretations, and one could find others.

A rational scientific mind may demand to know *which* of the above options is correct; and for this way of thinking, typical to the West, only *one* can be true; the others are to be eliminated. It is interesting to see here how this difference in mindset from that of the culture studied, can lead to misinterpretation.

For we are told in *HT* that (1) above is the solution: Aris says that the Karmapa kept silent because he considered Pemalingpa to be a fraud. Now we in turn might ask - no, speculate is the word - just why the author of *HT* chose that one. Some think he wished to be negative towards Bhutan; others that he wished to be more favourable to the Gelugpa school, as witnessed in the second half of his book. Here, too, there are many possible reasons: why, maybe even the mind's infinite capacity for self-deception ! But let us not start falling into the same trap. The interpretation doesn't matter for us. What does matter - and what in this case demands to be taken into consideration - is that in Buddhism, there are different kinds of meaning; and, particularly, four recognised levels or categories of answer[25]; as well as the notions of Relative and Absolute Meaning which have already been discussed.

We must also note that for the Buddhists themselves, the correct interpretation is quite clear; it is *not* the one offered to us; it is number (3). This interpretation is rendered

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25 The four categories of answer are: *dri-ba* (answering with another question); *bzhag pa* (avoiding or leaving); *lung bstan pa* (predicting); and a fourth, which is not always included, *khas len pa* (accepting the conditionalities of the questioner). In Vol.*Pa*, fol. 495 of his *Works*, Pemalingpa himself writes a refutation of his critics, recording what they had to say of him: "*la las bdud sprul zer / la las 'gong po'i sprul pa zer / la las zog po zer / la las rdzun gyi rkyal pa zer / la las dbang sdud mkhan po zer zhing ...*"

more evident by the fact that Karmapa on the same occasion requested Pemalingpa for all his teachings, and invited him for further conversations. This is recorded in the same passage, though *HT* unfairly omits to mention it.

So, finally, it appears more likely that the great Karmapa, like Drukpa Kunlé, are as Padma Tshewang says important witnesses *for* Pemalingpa, and not for the prosecution against him.

The problem lies as much in our way of thinking as in our opinions. It is admittedly hard to avoid. In the typical Buddhist way of thinking, not just one but several of the above interpretations may be seen as bearing a certain level of validity. Interpretation (3) is the 'main' level of answer, but this does not exclude others. Perhaps there is an element of (1) too: even saints can at times suffer a bit of egotism. What makes a 'real saint'? In Buddhism, this is quite an open-ended question. We in the West tend to be gravely concerned as to whether a saint did or did not perform certified miracles, was or was not a consistently good person. In Buddhism, however, any individual is, at any moment, no more than a collection of aggregates, and as such has many facets, many characters. Thus the many Buddhist saints who appear to act outrageously at times. Quoting Padmasambhava, Evans-Wentz reminds us of the relativity of concepts like 'good' and 'evil': "Various views concerning things are due merely to different mental concepts... the unenlightened see the external-transitory dually... as a thing is viewed, so it appears"[26].

The interest of this is not to refute the author of *HT*, but to note some things in the culture concerned which should, surely, influence the way scholarship approaches its subject. In his introduction the author himself says: "unless those societies are first studied from their own viewpoints..."(p.3). One feels that this is, in places, what is still lacking.

Some reviewers are perhaps voicing the same concern, as for example Kværne who wrote of the book that this approach appeared "not particularly helpful..."[27] to an understanding of Pemalingpa.

A wholesale defence of the Lamaist world is, of course, not possible either; as Humphreys once wrote, Tibetan Buddhism seems sometimes to contain the best and the worst[28]. But it is highly unfair to portray the "worst" as typical: for example where Aris says that the Vajrayana rituals of authorisation "take the form of a high-speed reading of the texts by the lama to the recipient" (p.35). The words appear carefully chosen, and unhappily, the author's tone can only be described as sneering.

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26 Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, pp. 37 and 231, citing Guru Rinpoche's *Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol.*

27 Kværne, *Acta Orientalia* vol. 51, p.302-306.

28 Humphreys, *Buddhism*, p.205.

In taking up the line that 'it was all in the mind', however, *HT* just brushes the fundamental Buddhist concept of Shunyata, Emptiness, which has to do with liberation from the mind's conditioning. A Buddhist might say that at this one point, the author stops just where he should have started. For the scholar's mind is examining Pemalingpa in an alien way: thinking that deceit is deceit, reality is reality, and one must find out which was the case... whereas for the Buddhist, these are in themselves only categories, mind-constructs. Here we end up looking not so much at a Buddhist problem as at our own.

It is a strange clash of worlds: the historian who is diligently concerned with filling in the facts, and the Buddhist who positively delights in their emptiness...

Was Pemalingpa a fraud? Buddhists say no, but in any case it doesn't make any difference. He is a fascinating figure and he is of great significance both within and beyond Bhutan. These are not the interesting questions raised by his life and work. One suspects, in the end, that the venerable old Karmapa's silence was specifically and judiciously aimed at the mind, five centuries later, of sceptical scholars.

A deeper probing both of the theory of Terma, and of the processes of Terma discovery, would have helped Aris' otherwise interesting book to avoid some of the above-mentioned weaknesses. *HT* does not offer us any discussion of the Terma theory and tradition as such, which in itself is remarkable: perhaps the book's most obvious shortcoming. Without knowing anything about this background, the whole Pemalingpa story can easily be made to look silly: one could do the same to any saint.

Many have been sceptical of the Terma tradition. As Sigmund K. Sætereng argues elsewhere, the scepticism is rather natural given our rational mentality. It is easy to dismiss some strange marks on rocks as having been formed by geological forces. However, most scholars of Buddhism happily do recognise what is to the Buddhist world the import of such phenomena and beliefs. As Eliade and many others have argued, myths and legends are to a great extent the motors of history, and their questionable empirical status is less significant than their claim to be nothing less than our elusive bedfellow, Reality itself.

Sceptics and Critics

Rational scepticism, of the type shown by the author of *HT*, is not new, as witnessed by the following remark of a sixteenth-century western sceptic regarding another magical footprint, the 'sri pada' of the Buddha on Adam's Peak: "They will not be able to convince a man of sound mind that the impression of the foot could be the miraculous impression of a man's foot, because this man would have had to be a giant and one of the biggest at that, and it seems as if this impression has been made by some hypocrite Gentile who must have retired to this place and wanted to create a reputation for himself..."[29]. The above attitude is echoed in the words of one of the foremost

29 Aksland, *The Sacred Footprint*, p.30.

Tibetan critics of the Nyingma scriptures, Sumpa Khenpo, writing in about 1750: "Is it not the case that... in later time some words were added, thus falsifying through obstinacy and individual fabrication? As they publicised the altered versions, does that not imply Kuntu Zangpo, Padmasambhava, and Vimalamitra to be promoters of lies?..." [30].

This is straight talking ! However, the above may be compared with the words of another orthodox scholar, Thukvan Choki Nyima: "Although some people styled themselves falsely as Discoverers... these only are liars, and the Concealed Books as a whole should not be condemned, as there certainly are many genuine ones... great men have said that the Teachings of the Concealed Books are completely pure..." [31].

Gelugpa thinkers in particular advance nine arguments against the Terma system. The principal reservation concerns their formal status rather than their potential worth. They do not consider that this mode of revelatory transmission is comparable to transmission through the historical lineages; they are also, understandably, dubious about the profusion of such teachings and the at times rather unorthodox approach of the Nyingmapas. In considering other Buddhist schools, such as Theravada, Nyingmapas will often reply that there is no contradiction or difference in principle, simply that the various schools do not operate on the same levels.

Generally, the comments of non-Nyingma scholars have been respectful and cautious; which is true of Tibet's great compiler Buton himself, who said he would "prefer to remain impartial" on the authenticity of some old Nyingma Tantras, which he chose not to include in his Canon, noting that Sanskrit originals were said reliably to exist[32].

Outright disbelief is often refreshing, even though it may lead to unfair reasoning or conclusions. If we look at other writings regarding Terma, however, we find a measured scepticism. For example, Aris himself quotes the highly respected Tibetologists Snellgrove and Richardson's conclusion that "no imaginative and roguish group of Tibetans sat down to invent all the stuff out of their heads..."[33]. Snellgrove, while not disguising his reserve, maintains this attitude in his recent major work *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*: "Many texts must have survived... many more were composed from earlier fragmentary material and then conveniently refound..." [34]

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30 Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor (1704-1788); quoted from his *Dpag bsam ljon bzang* in: Dargyay, "The Kun Byed Rgyal Po'i Mdo", *Soundings* p.285.

31 Thukvan Rinpoche Choki Nyima: *Grub mtha'* ..., op.cit., quoted from Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism* p.67.

32 Buton Rinchengrub (1290-1364), famous compiler of the Kanjur. Quoted from his *Chos 'byung,* vol. *Ya*, by: Dargyay, *Soundings*, p.286.

33 Snellgrove and Richardson, p.172.

34 Snellgrove, p. 398.

These scholars, whatever their private opinions, do not in any event spend time accusing the Nyingmapas of being frauds; and their measured detachment enables them to pursue their studies in the most fruitful way. But we also have to take most seriously the Buddhist's protest that this is not enough; the Buddhist view is that understanding not accompanied by real insight through meditational practice, cannot be sufficient.

Then there are the words of positively inclined authors, who although foreigners are often Buddhists themselves. Thus Keith Dowman, whilst making no attempt to gloss over the issue of fraud, as mentioned earlier puts his finger on the essential point, that "to a large extent the terma theory provides a metaphysical support that *displaces* dependence on" lineal purity and empirical factuality; and again, that "no distinction is made between (Guru Rinpoche's) corporeal existence and his appearance in visions: indeed, according to the metaphysical view of Dzogchen, his empirical status is identical in both forms of being"[35].

And finally, we have the critical evidence of scholars and committed Buddhist practitioners such as Padma Tshewang, natives of the culture. It is clear that for them, historical details are somewhat less important than the inner significance of the subject; yet their work is impeccably accurate on doctrinal matters, widely researched in source material, and deeply reflected. This is surely clear-sighted; for, to quote Jung once more, this time from his famous *Answer to Job*: "Meaning is something that always demonstrates itself and is experienced on its own merits. The spirit and meaning of Christ are present and perceptible to us even without the miracles. Miracles appeal only to the understanding of those who cannot perceive the meaning" [36].

The Games of Reason

What to make of all these opinions? The unsuspecting reader may well be tempted to conclude cynically, like the philosopher Bertrand Russell, that our reasoning faculties are pretty useless since they are just as capable of finding false arguments as true ones.

And indeed, a skilful writer may easily deceive us; just as a good tale poorly told may on the contrary turn readers away. I find here that I am leading my reader, or am led myself, into a little trap of the very sort which Padma Tshewang springs on his reader in his final paragraphs. Perhaps it is a Buddhist phenomenon. For the question, what to think of all these opinions, contains within itself the essence of an answer. *What to think!* Surely thinking itself is the obstacle: that kind of thinking which is done with the head, with the reason only, as opposed to the real, concrete apprehension provided by experience alone. It is the scientist's dilemma: we cannot pronounce upon a situation unless we are ourselves part of the experiment and within the experiment-field itself, and at that point we are no longer just scientists.

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35 See Note 27.

36 Jung, *Answer to Job*, in: *Collected Works Vol.11*, p.360.

Finally, this is just what Padma Tshewang is perhaps offering us, if we can only see it: the opportunity to read and think through a hundred or so pages and still, in the end, to be deceived into another reality: a reality that includes the sharpest critical thinking but certainly embraces far more too. And, in the spirit as I see it of Vajrayana, or of a Drukpa Kunlé, so we too can find an apparently 'negative' book - Relative Meaning again ! - as something to be absolutely thankful for, we can use it as the very Means towards insight: the apparent poison that works like nectar.

In short, though many opinions are possible, neither Faith nor Scepticism need lead one to over-credulity, nor misinterpretations, nor to disregard for the more essential issues such as the actual legacy and significance of a tradition.

Three target groups for books like *HT* were mentioned above. So now let us look at them again.

Firstly, the Buddhist/Bhutanese audience itself. One might, as a good scientist, argue that demolishing false claims clears the way for that audience to concentrate on the real message of the subject. That is only true, though, *if* those people are in the first place hooked on historicity. And since the first aim of any novice Buddhist is to be free of just that kind of thing, then such a course of argument is rather irrelevant. To *Buddhists*.

Secondly, the credulous fans of Tibetan Buddhist magic. If they are impressed by miracles, then they too are missing the point - of Tibetan Buddhism, that is. So, what are they interested in? Simply in confirming their own ways of thinking, with the twist that the Tibetan stuff is more exciting than the boring old Christian version? The exercise is not particularly useful in their case either; after all, Aris' book is supposed to be telling them something about Buddhist culture and history. By insufficient treatment of the Buddhists' own conceptions of Reality, the result is, simply, misleading.

And finally, the international community of Tibetologists. *HT*, a lively and very readable effort to bring alive an extraordinary, legend-shrouded figure, seems to have two serious flaws. Firstly, on the rational grounds it champions, it fails to present any serious proof against Pemalingpa. Secondly, it does not explain the Terma doctrine at all, nor does it illuminate the complex sectarian context within which the Tertons enacted their lives.

However, with the above warning remarks in mind, the book is still of interest, and our hope is that it may, along with our own small contribution, provoke continuing lively reflection and discussion on the vital and fascinating tradition of the Tertons.

N. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel

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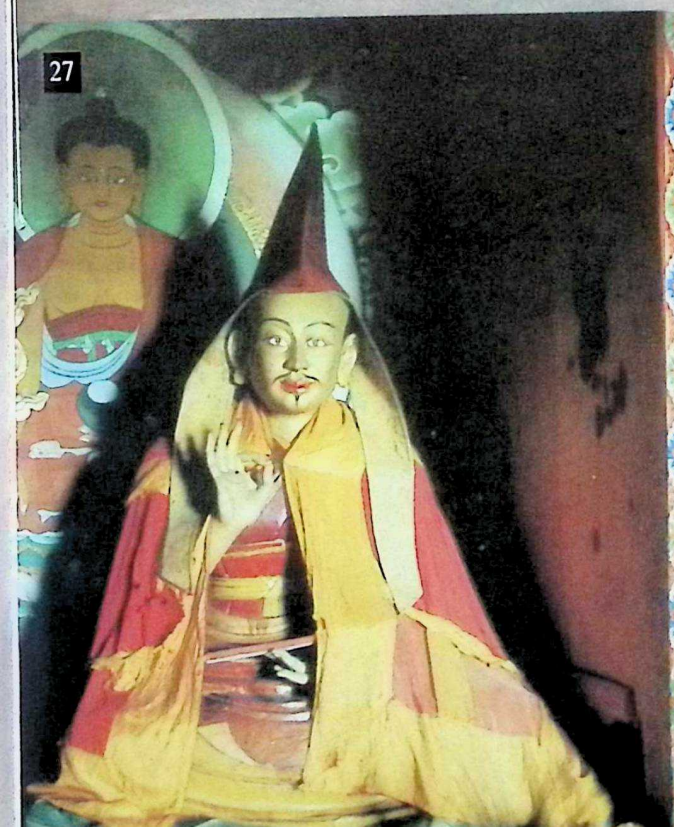

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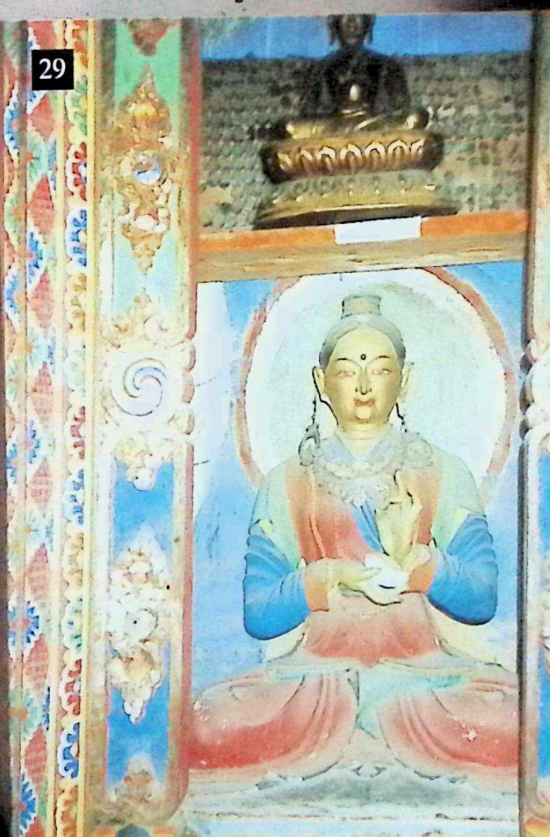

CHAPTER 3: MOTHER EARTH'S TREASURES AND THEIR REVEALERS

- AN ECOPHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE -

by SIGMUND K. SÆTRENG

Obeisance
– to the Bartsam Lama Pema Wangchen, for illumination of connectedness
– to Pemalingpa, the magnificently improvising finder of unexpected paths
– to Tseringma, who is everywhere and teaches ecological wisdom even in Norwegian:

To these three, then, for light, skilful means and the wisdom of the living landscape.

Introductory words

I will talk of certain mountain and valley-dwellers, not yet alienated from their land through competitive industrialism. My emphasis will be on their miraculously meaning-filled, spiritually living landscapes, and on how the people of these landscapes have a message to us in our age of increasing ecological and social crisis.

Within this setting, I speak of Pemalingpa and his tradition and environment - particularly as represented by the experienced reality of Termas, the ultimate, wonder-filled treasures of that environment, as well as of the Dakinis, the sky-dancing ladies who act as the guardians and sometimes revealers of those treasures. In my ecophilosophical perspective, attempting closeness to tantric reality, the Dakinis - sometimes in the form of mountain deities - play a central role as that tradition's teachers of nature's interconnectedness as well as protectors of the tantric web of materio-spiritual life.[1]

Additionally, I stress the norm of seeking 'skilful means' within Tantric Buddhism, as a contrast to the abstract model-approach of the Western mechanistic-manipulative system. I am relating this to the goals of self-reliance and local resourcefulness - central values in the contemporary ecopolitical movement.[2]

My selection of aspects and my interpretation of the Tantric tradition focus on these items, since my aim is to try to give the reader a feel for certain socio-ecological

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1 Here I am thinking of, among others the Nyingma philosopher Longchen Rabjam who said, "A simile for Tantra is texture : out of the many strands of the weft and the warp a piece of cloth is woven." His elaborate definiton is given in H. V. Guenther *: Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice,* Middlesex 1971, p. 157f. (Pemalingpa is regarded as an incarnation of Longchen Rabjam himself in the lineage from Padmasambhava).

2 A central inspirational source is still E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful,* London 1974. It has had a large number of followers, lately within the circles of the academic economists. Not least relevant in this connection is its celebrated chapter "Buddhist Economics".

elements in Bhutan's culture. One side of that culture seems to me to have a strong contemporary relevance well beyond Bhutan. I am speaking as one of a growing number of people who investigate alternatives to the present world-wide tendency towards Westernized standardization of cultures, and the treatment of nature as merely a resource-base for economic growth.[3]

The necessity of a bridge

I try to get as close as I can to the core of another culture, different from the one I grew up in. The transition that such a task requires, asks for elements of identification, a bridge to walk on. Such bridges are largely unavailable without related notions, perceptions, emotional attachments, myths etc. found in the writer's own background.

I believe to have found such elements - building-blocks for a bridge - in my own Norwegian mountain farmers' culture, elements that inspired me to go to Bhutan in the first place. I will illustrate some of those elements below. One of my aims is to indicate how Vajrayana and Pemalingpa are not as exotically strange as Westerners normally believe. The existence of bridges like the one mentioned between an Eastern and a Western national culture points to some deeply located human universality. That is why I feel that using such an approach might have a wider interest. However, today the possible parallels in the West are buried under the conceptions of the techno-commercial system and its mechanistic patterns - by many nowadays thought to be the main cause of the current ecological and social crisis.[4]

But increasingly we also hear that this modern Western world order undermines its own existence, and that we shall have to rediscover our roots to be able to build something different - a socio-cultural order that both protects life and a meaningful human existence. My claim is that we have, in fact, similar ancient roots on which we could build such a foundation, and that in this respect we have something to learn from those of the older traditions that are not yet fatally wounded. Among these, Vajrayana seems to me to be a particularly rich source. Bhutan is important in this connection, since that is where this tradition is not only very much alive, but is given a determined protection as the backbone of national development.

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3 Professor Trygve Haavelmo, Nobel Laureate in Economics for 1990, illustrates how there is a growing tendency among Western economists to turn in their tracks and listen to other cultures : Western, mechanistic methods, propelled around the world through the free-market system, "is a curse". Instead, the Third World will gain real development only from their own roots. With other leading economists, sharing this view, he is represented in : Goodland Daly et al. (Eds) : *Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development*, UNESCO, Paris 1991.

4 Recent and lucid analyses to this effect are found in : J. Mander : *In the Absence of the Sacred*, San Francisco 1991 ; J. Rifkin : *Biosphere Politics*, N. Y. 1991 ; Vittorio Hösle : *Philosophie der Ökologishen Krise*, Munich 1991.

There are now Western writers who single out the Bhutanese world-view as uniquely rich in integrating all facets of existence; thus, Michael Kowalewski states: "The interweaving of the themes of sacred history, landscape and spirituality is a particular feature of Bhutanese religion."[5]

National heroes and pride of identity

In any culture, certain personalities stand out as special carriers of the tradition, as someone to identify with and to be proud of. In the current worldwide debate on nationalism, the tendency in the West is to focus on its negative sides. But we should not loose sight of the fact that national pride is indispensable if the goal is to preserve identity as attached to a locality, and to foster its responsible protection.[6]

Pemalingpa, with his vigorous, wide-ranging accomplishments and influence on Bhutan's history, is eminently suited to function as a particularly inspiring expression of the nation's "identity through diversity".

The light in which I see Pemalingpa, is as a national saint and identity-symbol of Bhutan, and as a personality that expresses the totality of Vajrayana's world-view and the peculiar and strong attachment to landscape characterizing that world-view, particularly in its Nyingma version.

The Terma tradition stresses this: the "treasures" in rocks, hills, lakes and streams - or in the minds of persons meditating in nature - imbue nature with value.[7] To this end, I am focusing on the eco-social aspects of Pemalingpa's conception of the world and his activity and influence within that context.

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5 The quotation is from a section where Kowalewski comments on a description of Bumthang by Longchen Rabjam (see n. 1), where the beauty of the lanscape is connected to Dzogchen philosophy, "particularly near the heart of the Bhutanese world-view." "The Phenomenology of Bhutanese Buddhism," paper read at the SOAS Bhutan conference, London, March 1993. See also, from the same conference: B. W. Bunting and Tashi Wangchuk: "Bhutan: An Environmental Ethic for the 21st Century" and Sonam Chhöki: "The Sacred and the Obscene in Bhutanese Buddhism". (School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC 1. Convenor: Dr. Michael Hutt, South Asia Centre).

6 I have compared the very different directions Nepal and Bhutan have taken in: "A Tale of Two Countries", *Resurgence,* July/August 1993.

7 My Sherpa companion through many years, Lama Ngawang Yönden of the Plough Furrow Valley on the Nepalese–Tibetan Border stressed this: the powers of the gods and goddesses in nature are strong or weak according to the amount of devotion given to them by the human beings. Thomas Laird, an American scholar studying Sherpa culture, says the same thing: quoting the Head Lama of the Tyangboché Gompa: "The power of the spirits comes from the *mun* (*chitta*) of people; it is strong of weak in accordance with our devotion to them" (Chitta: motivational source, spiritual power). See Th. Laird: "Mountains for Devotion, Mountains for Conquest" translated into Norwegian for the book *Grønn pepper i turbinene* ("Green pepper in the turbines"), Norwegian Universities Press, Oslo 1985.

The doubly living landscape: the ecosystem as a Tantric materio-spiritual web of Life

It has been said that the Tantric approach to reality, incorporating, pre-Buddhist protector deities, and in general Tibeto-Himalayan animism, is a primitive addition to Buddhism that debases the Dharma.[8] My view is on the contrary that Vajrayana's multitudes of nature spirits (as well as its welcoming acceptance of all the "animal" functions and drives of the human body) makes nature come alive with its own intentions and purposes.[9] My contention is that this feature has promoted a lifestyle and a work ethic which protects the environment, its diversity and its resources. Combined with classical and philosophical Buddhism (Theravada, Madhyamika, Yogacara, ..), the Tantric elaborations keep the quest for liberation concrete and communal, as a healthy counter-balance to idealistic and individualistic trends in Buddhist philosophy. And this concreteness and communality, I would claim, further locally rooted feelings of identity that add to the protective effect. The landscape of the Tibetans and the Bhutanese lives on two levels, the bio-material and the 'bio-spiritual'. I use the latter term, since the two levels are interpenetrating.[10] In a community of farmers and herdsmen, however, the bio-material processes are necessarily decisive in the everyday work situation; but these are constantly being adjusted by spiritual considerations. In the modern West, 'science' and liberalistic economic 'theory' play a similar action-steering role - however non-compassionate and often grossly detrimental to both human society and nature.

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8 "... hushed silence and mystery has kept surrounding tantric texts and tantric lore..." "The official Indian culture, ... kept tantrism well outside the ken of permissible interests. "Agehananda Bharati: *The Tantric Tradition,* London 1965, p. 9, 11.

9 Although from a different starting point, an increasing number of Western philosophers and psychologists are approaching a "living nature realism". Reacting to mechanistic anthropocentricism, they are following the lead of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*The Visible and the Invisible*), and J. J. Gibson, founder of the school of "Direct Perception Psychology" (*The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception,* Boston 1979). The young American philosopher David Abram has studied the Buddhist-Tantric relationship to nature in the light of these and related thinkers. (Dissertation to be published).

10 Per Kværne is struck by this extraordinarily populated landscape in his Introduction to R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz: *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* (Graz 1975): "On opening this book [we are] invited to enter a strange world..; a world where nothing is devoid of meaning if one can but interpret the signs, .." (p. III). – And Kowalewski (*op. cit.*): ".. a whole plethora of historical, religious, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, divine, demonic and human... beings inhabit the landscape, and are intertwined into a sort of gridlock of spheres of power the continuously interact in space and time, and come to shape and give meaning to what might seem silent and inanimate." Later on, Kowalewski has a very important observation, with which I agree fully: "One might say that there is no 'environment' in Bhutan as of another nature forming a periphery around man as a centre. There is no concept of nature, and therefore not of the 'supernatural". The world, jiten ... is a network of relationships, a dynamism fuelled by one's deeds and mediated by the rituals left as part of the compassion of the lamas who involve themselves in the affairs of the world, but seeing it as a magic show."

What about the 'miracles' performed by tertöns and other Tantric adepts - do I accept them? I shall return to this below, but let me here simply say that the answer is in line with my general approach as already stated. I cannot erase my rationalistic background, but from that starting point I try to go as far as I can in identifying with situations where the rational can no longer help. To get near to the tantrist's experience, I use illustrations from my own traditional culture and my own life. My private life and beliefs are, as such, not meant to be interesting to the readers. Nevertheless, I use myself, hopefully, as their representative - thereby attempting to lead them some part of the way.

Tseringma - Tantric protectress of sustainable life

I was introduced to the ecological aspects of Vajrayana through meeting the cult of the mountain goddess Tseringma, "The Mother of Long Life". That event took place 24 years ago, occurring in a locality on the Tibet-Nepal border, where the beauty and grandeur of the Tseringma peak immediately and eloquently spoke of her sacredness. That I was simultaneously meeting a culture where that sentiment was not limited to the aesthetic but expressed an important condition for existence, was gradually revealed as I will illustrate below. To underline her importance, local lamas presented me with the contents of Termas revealing a deep connection between Padmasambhava and Tseringma.[11]

This leads me to the next point: There is one particular feature of the doubly living landscape of the Tibeto-Himalayan region that is strikingly different from mainstream Western traditions, including their older manifestations, viz. the male/female complementarity regarded as vitally basic to the structure of reality. I see this, too, in the light of the doubly living landscape: The sexuality of the biological level is parallelled at the spiritual level by the yab/yum relation basic to the Tantric world process. On both levels, the union, in all its diversity, constitutes a central, fruit-bringing thread in the constantly creative world fabric. And in both cases, a union through genuine love removes the ego - a decisive step towards enlightenment in Buddhist terms. Through this, Vajrayana metaphysics is at "the core of life" in a more earth-rooted and comprehensive manner than Theravada and other forms of 'pure' Buddhism. This aspect enhances, of

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11 Friedrich Funke, in his *Religiöses Leben der Sherpa,* Innsbruck-München 1969, translates a devotional text to Tseringma (p. 242 f.) which is an exception, since it is probably composed by a Gelukpa lama (indicating the wide range of the Tseringma cult - she even has her own chamber in the Jokhang temple in Lhasa). In this text Tseringma is named "Mistress of all Khadomas (Dakinis)". This thought, that Tseringma — with her four sisters — are Dakinis, appears to be widespread. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (*op. cit.*) p. 179f.) presents a Kagyupa text where each of the five sisters are "brought into connection with one particular Dakini". According to Funke and others, Tseringma is the mountain goddess above all for the Sherpa (a lower one is Jomo Lungma, with her abode n the mountain known in the West as Everest); she is "the Mother of the world, the universe". She is "common property of mankind". But Funke is wrong is saying that Tseringma has no local cult. She is intensely worshipped in the Plough Furrow as a special protectress for the inhabitants of that valley, where the "ecological" principles she teaches have a most direct and concrete effect on local behaviour. (Funke, p. 71, 77).

course, the contrast to the model that guides modern Western social and cultural activity, characterized by an increasing number of philosophers as abstract ("off the earth"), rationalistically manipulative and nature-alienated. Pemalingpa epitomizes this contrast, not least in his constant and intimate relationship to the Dakinis, who guide him at every important step. In true Buddhist Tantric fashion, as representing the female principle in the universe, they are the sources of wisdom, while Pemalingpa fills the role as their necessary counterpart of compassionate activity - the male principle.

Pemalingpa - Tantric weaver of colourful life

Pemalingpa is no ordinary saint, even though he belongs to one of the classical Mahayana types, the energetic, inventive, rule-breaking kind, socially and politically active. He was more so than anyone I know about, more energetic and more diverse and quality-rich. He was less blatantly radical than Drukpa Kunlek - "the mad saint of Bhutan", but more than making up for that in being constructive in all his various activities. During his life, his personality flowered in all directions, bodily and spiritually, so much so that he, in his own person, can be seen as representing the totality of the community where he was active - from the craftsmen to the preachers and thinkers, from the activists to the poets and musicians. This is amply illustrated in Padma Tshewang's biography. And this broad cultural imprint produced a multitude of inspired activities in the centuries to follow, so that today the legacy of Pemalingpa is an important clue to Bhutan's identity. The complex behaviour and development that Pemalingpa's life manifests is, of course, a vivid expression of Vajrayana Tantric philosophy, where the full range of human impulses is accepted and taken as a positive resource in the quest towards Enlightenment.

Three elements

The concept of skilful means - in the mundane sphere appearing as practical, inventive improvisation - is not yet generally drawn into the sphere of ecopolitics within the Western environmental movement. An exception is the Norwegian part of the movement, where mountain farmers, fishermen and activists from the urban areas tend to work together. The historical background for this cooperation can be seen in the traditional heroes so dependent on inventive nature that they themselves had to be inventive. These are symbolic figures strikingly reminiscent of Pemalingpa.

Below, I shall introduce the central figure of "skilful means" in the Norwegian tradition, the Ash Lad, Norway's Pemalingpa. Persons like these, model personalities of many communities "at the edge of the wilderness", are "natural generalists", in stark contrast to the specialists who uphold the modern West. A society run by specialists and populated by passive masses functioning as their clients is a vulnerable society. It is top-heavy and rigid in the face of changing circumstances, since its majority of sensitive members are not permitted to let their sensitivities have practical effect. This is the connection of democracy with social and ecological sustainability. A society of the pyramidal kind, with managerial specialists constituting the summit section of the pyramid is both anti-democratic and anti-ecological, and for the same reason.

This perspective is now gradually gaining ground among ecopolitically active groups in the West. Additionally, the Buddhist view that reality is a continuous, creative process, is gaining acceptance in these circles, attaching themselves to the few process philosophers that the West has produced.[12] Tomorrow always contains novelties, i.e. events that never occurred before. The practical response to this, is the training, from early childhood, which aims at building preparedness for broad-ranging improvisational ability. This element as a central goal for an ecologically and socially sustainable society is not yet generally grasped among alternative-seeking Westerners. I dare say this is because emerging Western eco-politics has its roots in modern techno-urbanized agglomerations, increasingly inhabited by people who think that milk is produced in factories (I myself once hand-milked a cow in America, and some of the on-lookers thought they witnessed a case of sexual perversion). I would claim that skilful, inventive ability is the only adequate response to reality, if that reality is conceived of as a process - whether in ecological or Buddhist terms. The concrete world is void of fixed divisions (shunyata) - revealed both through meditation and through the near-to-earth activity required by low-technology mountain-communities.[13] There is a correspondence between everyday experience and metaphysics in Buddhist societies - not least in those adhering to Tantrism - that is lacking in the modern West, assuming the future to be a map. But that map cracks every day and the sum is eco-social crisis. Perhaps Pemalingpa's multi-coloured weaving and its complex impact can occur only in a non-industrial, non-urbanized world, a world non-alienated by static machine models, close to the incessantly co-arising creativity of earth, rivers, plants and animals? In fact, this is the direction pointed to by an increasing number of Western ecologists.[14]

What I am talking of here are three elements that characterize the human members of ecologically oriented societies:

1) The skills of the generalist, disregarding the mind/body dichotomy (and the division theoretical/practical) so characteristic of the West, thus implying the acceptance of full human development.

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12 Mainly, Hernri Bergson (especially *L´évolution créatrice,* Paris 1907) and A. N. Whitehead (*Process and Reality* 1929; N. Y 1960). Students of theirs, trying to bridge the West-East gap through process philosophy, are Steve Odin: *Process Metaphysics and Hua-Yen Buddhism,* Albany 1982; Francis H. Cook: *Hau-yen Buddhism – The Jewel Net of Indra,* London 1981; Ryusei Takeda: "Some Reflection on Yogacara Philosophy in the Light of Whitehead's Metaphysics", Center for Process Studies, 1325 N. College, Claremont, CA 91711, USA. The book by Odin gives an impression of their increasing number.

13 ".., to indulge in planning is like fishing in a dry ravine filled with rocks, hoping that water will cover them." ".., it is foolish to think of what the future may bring and better to reduce wishes and desires. .." "Our present activities are like housekeeping in a dream." Khetsun Sangpo Rinboché: *Tantric Practice in Nying-ma, commentary on The Sacred Word of Lama Gun-Sang,* Ithaca, N. Y. 1982, p. 37.

14 An early one was George Wald (biologist, Nobel Laureate 1967): "I do not think one can lead a full human life without living it among animals and plants. From that view-point, urban societies have already lost large parts of their humanity, .." I have elaborated the point in: "Inside Nature", *The Future of Progress,* The International Society for Ecology and Culture (Ed.: Helena Norberg-Hodge), Bristol, Berkeley 1992.

2) The view of the world as a process, having as its practical counterpart the challenge to develop broad-ranging improvisational ability.
3) Rootedness in a "doubly living landscape", i.e. an existence where value and meaning are intimately bound up with the challenges of material survival. In this landscape the profane and sacred are interfused.

These three elements are closely linked, so that any one of them will not function well without interaction with the other two. As a whole, they characterize the Tantric/Bhutanese worldview and mode of behaviour, and are, so to speak, condensed in the person-process named Pemalingpa. Following the Norwegian tradition, my view is that an ecophilosophical understanding of the phenomenon of Pemalingpa has to join these three threads. The aim is an eco-tantric fabric. But that fabric will not materialize without the "earth mother" basis, the Dakinis and consorts revealing, pushing, guiding and inspiring Pemalingpa - as any other Nyingma-Tantric master: These are the objective sources of Nature's ecological wisdom without which the subjective, "male" action-potentialities would come to nothing. As intimated above, I let these spiritual personifications of the living landscape be represented by Tseringma. The next section will clarify this.

Tseringma, Termas and the Pemalingpa lineage

As an example of a Terma text dealing with Tseringma, there is one the discovery of which is ascribed to Longchen Rabjam (fourteenth century), expanded on by Jigme Lingpa (late eighteenth century); the two are named "father and son" of the lineage of Dzogchen.[15] The Five Sisters of Long Life (Tsering Chenga) are here equated with five Dakinis,[16] being manifestations of the Five Wisdoms. Without the five, life could not be. They have three modes of existence - an outer one as sisters, an inner one as Dakinis, and a secret one as the Five Wisdoms of the Buddha nature. The sisters always dwell in very beautiful mountain landscapes, where the valleys have dense and flower-filled forests, and where mirror-like stones are found, symbolising Tseringma's ability to reflect and reveal all aspects of the world[17]. One may ask Tseringma or the Five Sisters for any kind of help; they are always ready (at a moment's notice - as "sky walkers" they are very fast). Of the five, or as a synthesis of the five, Tashi (or Jomo) Tseringma is the basis or limitless resource, named Ether or Nothingness (stong-pa-nyid, shunyata). Even Kailash, as well as other "glass-like" mountains, belong to Tseringma, while she does not belong to any fixed place; she is like the sun, producing reflexes from anything without differentiation. "You are the source of all Buddhas - as a creator of the world."[18] "The

15 Dilgo Kyentse Rimpoché: *The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones,* Boston/London, p. 163.

16 More on the Dakini connection, see footnote 11.

17 This feature, describing unspoiled, diverse and beautiful areas of nature as characteristic of the abodes where Tseringma or Tsering Chenga rule, is typical of the Terma texts dealing with these goddesses. The ecological climax system as an ideal is here an interpretation near at hand. The devotional text mentioned in n. 11 is very supportive of this interpretation.

four seasons are You who change temper/character." Tseringma is the protector of the Dharma since her conversion by Guru Rimpoche. She is the protector of Dzogchen. ...

This summary of the contents of the Terma has been made for me by Khenpo Phuntsok Tashi, who emphasises the point that Pemalingpa belonged to the mentioned lineage, being regarded as a remanifestation of Longchen Rabjam, the eminent Nyingma philosopher and founder of Tharpaling monastery in Bumthang. The Terma quoted speaks of the extremely central position the Tseringma conception occupied in the tradition Pemalingpa belonged to, at the same time highlighting the ecological orientation of that tradition. From Pemalingpa's own hand there is at least one Terma celebrating Tseringma. Pemalingpa extracted two Termas at Tharpaling. The central figure among the sculptures in one of the Tharpaling temples depicts Kunzang Yab-Yum, emphasising the basic symbolism of fulfilment through the Father/Mother (Skilful Means/Wisdom) union and expressing the very structure of the Tantric universe within which Pemalingpa moved. That structure is reflected in the union Tertön/Dakini, activated whenever a Terma is to be uncovered, a union resulting, so to speak, in the birth of a Nature's treasure-child, revitalizing the threads of Compassion/Wisdom spun originally through the union of Guru Rimpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal.[19] Emphasising the structure, textual Termas are usually, when extracted (being born), presented in 'Dakini script' - the script of the sky-walkers, messengers of complex, enigmatic Nature, understandable only to those few who have broken the shell of static individuality, Dakini-informed skilful improvisers, process-personalities attuned to Nature. This male/female totality, necessary birth-giver to "long life" (tsering), is also reflected, in my eco-spiritual perspective, in Pemalingpa's own lineage of rebirths: Starting with the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen's daughter, Pemasel, it continues as female through several lives. Not only that, but some of the lives have animal manifestations, additionally emphasising the eco-logically complex unity of all life forms. Pemalingpa is here, of course, expressing his membership

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18 It is worth noting that in this Terma text, discovered and elaborated on by two of the most prominent contributors to Dzogchen Philosphy, Mother Earth, "Nature Herself" appears to take the place of Adi Buddha, Dorje Sempa (the primeval Buddha of Yogacara/Nyingma) – a male all-creator figure. It is tempting to draw a connection with Gaia, the earth goddess of ancient Greece, used as a designation for the biosphere as a self-regulating macro-organism according to the theory of J. Lovelock (*Gaia – a new look at life on Earth,* Oxford 1987), L. Margulis (*Micro-cosmos – Four Billion Years of Microbial Evolution,* London 1987) and a widening circle of scientists from various disciplines. Even though the gap is wide between the two traditions, the Gaia theory represents a reaction to "masculine/manipulative mechanistic thought" that should make the Buddhist/Tantric view of reality more accessible to the West.

19 This is, admittedly, a somewhat liberal interpretation. My main inspiration here is: *The Lotus-born - The Life Story of Padmasambhava* (*Sanglingma*), composed by Yeshe Tsogyal, revealed as a Terma by Nyang Ral Nyima Öser, Boston and London 1993. (Foreword: Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoché, translated from the Tibetan by Erik Pema Kunsang). Throughout, my aim is a model of eco-philosophical implications of the Tantra/Terma tradition, offering a bridge to Western readers. But grains of salt are needed, and having crossed the bridge, "Seek your own way, with diligence!" (Buddha Gautam Shakyamuni).

in Vajrayana's process-society of the six realms of beings - a radical eco-centric view of existence, indeed.[20]

Pemalingpa and Nature's Rhythms

As a nature-rhythmic interlude, we need now to talk of how real treasures of the wisdom of all things' unity have to be presented as song, music and dance, as rhythmical movement engaging the whole of the human mind/body being. Pemalingpa made a decisive contribution to the Bhutanese heritage treasure of religious dance. In my context, his activity here is important, since these dances or dance dramas express the process-ecological nature of Tantric reality. This quality has been stressed by Bruce Bunting and Tashi Wangchuk: "One highly significant Bhutanese tradition is the cham, a masked dance that reinforces Buddhist teachings. In the cham, monks and laymen clad in ancient costumes whirl synchronously to the rhythm of sacred music. As they dance in a circle, they spin round and round in pirouettes, thereby strengthening in the audience's mind the cyclic nature of existence and the interconnectedness of all things."[21]

The example given in this volume of a dance instruction authored by Pemalingpa (Peling Ging Sum) is again a Terma elaboration. Its treasure origin of course gives its content an authority beyond human invention, something one cannot quarrel with - as compelling as any natural phenomenon. That authority is strengthened here where the teaching is presented in the form of music and dance. Through that, it is a most direct expression of the rhythmic process of the spiritually overflowing, Tantric landscape. The dancers and on-lookers are led into a sort of all-engaging meditation. The dancers form a mandala, a moving, rhythmic mandala, more concretely engaging than reading of texts or immovable meditation. In addition it is communal: an activity and a way in keeping with - as mentioned before - the Mahayana's all-aboard vehicle, and hence a most appropriate expression of Pemalingpa's personality. These dance dramas also express of the three elements introduced above, characterizing ecologically oriented societies (the improvisational element is taken care of through the interludes between the more formal parts of the dance progression, and through the fact that even for the formal parts the instructions are imprecise and dependent upon bodily interpretation on the spot by the dance master).[22]

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20 This interpretative perspective is, I should think no more far-fetched than the frame of Freudian psychologism employed by Michael Aris to explain Pemalingpa's behaviour. See, e.g. *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives,* p. 98f. – Of course the approaches are different, since I am trying to cross a bridge, while Aris is observing from the Western river-bank.

21 "Bhutan: An Environmental Ethic for the 21st Century", see n. 5.

22 Additionally, the concrete and communal nearness to nature's own, complex orchestra is in general a characteristic of Tibetan religious music, its orchestra as well as the chanting of the monks or nuns: it employs dense, semi-chaotic sound clusters, ordered only as blocks or sheets in progression. There is no attempt at detailed control as in Western music (and most other music traditions). Instead, in a relaxed (but well-trained) manner, you here enter a cosmic communality of sound,

The intimate relationship Pemalingpa had with the Dakinis also relates to the dances connected with his name. Many, perhaps all, of these were demonstrated to him by Dakinis in trance-like states. The ecological-tantrist aspect I am talking about comes to the fore at the occasions when Termas had been extracted: the revealed treasures had to be presented to the community through singing and dancing. Particularly noteworthy is the event of Pemalingpa's first extraction from the river-cave in Mebartso. Pemalingpa is very worried as he does not know how to sing the text and dance to it. Then, in a dream he is taught by no less than the foremost of all sky-walkers, Yeshe Tsogyal, Guru Rimpoche's consort - a kind of experience, I am convinced, that would assure any wavering youth that he was the appointed one for something great. She sang for him, chapter by chapter, and then demonstrated the sacred dances of the Five Dakinis.[23] Later on, the official presentation of the Terma takes 21 days, and every night Dakinis appear to instruct Pemalingpa for the next day.[24] And so on. The doubly living landscape has a strong, multiple pulse in Pemalingpa's life!

Tantric lands and ecological principles - the Beyul

I have promised to be concrete and also to explain more fully why I have chosen the Tseringma/Dakini figures to play an insight-giving, complementary role in relation to Pemalingpa and Tertöns in general. What follows will deal in more detail with the two poles: Nature's wisdom and compassionate, skilful means. As mentioned briefly in the beginning, my first experience with the "doubly living landscape" happened at the foot of the mountain Tseringma. During many years, that experience was deepened. Tseringma is not only a cosmic Mother Earth, she is also the local protectress of a Beyul (sbas-yul) - a valley of refuge, or hidden valley. There are a number of such places along the Himalayan range; one of them is Bumthang, Pemalingpa's home district. They are all, as sacred places, established and consecrated by Guru Rimpoche. Their status requires their inhabitants to live by the principles of non-violence - in a wide sense, including compassionate behaviour towards animals and plants.[25] These valleys are, in most cases, difficult of access, and they are meant to be refuges for people seeking freedom from violence, strife and struggle. These valleys are of particular interest to my theme, as they present condensed and pure versions of ecological implications of the Buddhist-Tantric world-view. This is not least the case with the valley near Tseringma, difficult to reach, tucked away in the highest Eastern Himalayas, directly on the Nepal-Tibetan border. Due

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controllable only to a very limited extent - again a Tantric fabric unfolding towards realized no-thingness, *shunyata*.

For an outline of Bhutanese dance dramas addressed to Western readers, see Francoise Pommaret: *An Illustrated Guide to Bhutan*, Geneva 1990, pp. 102-115.

23 The possible connection here to Tsering Chenga seems to follow from the Tseringma Terma uncovered by Longchen Rabjam, summarized earlier. See also n. 11, pointing to a plausible connection between Tseringma and Yeshé Tsogyal as the star Dakini.

24 See Lopen Pemala's presentation in the volume.

25 The journal *Kailash* (Kathmandu) has carried several articles on the Beyul concept and on concrete Beyul places. One of them is Johan Reinhard: "Khembalung – The Hidden Valley", vol VI, No. 1, 1978 (Kathmandu), pp. 5–37.

to its isolation one can still find there, not only professed principles but a practice in keeping with the traditional value-system. The name of this valley is Plough-Furrow (I avoid the Chöké name in order not to attract the tourist industry; the name will be explained below).

Tseringma watches over this valley and its inhabitants, making sure that they follow the basic principles of a Beyul. She was installed in this position after being converted to Buddhism by Guru Rimpoche 1200 years ago. According to the local legend, he had to make full use of his power to achieve this. Tseringma resisted fiercely, and in particular, she did not want to see any human beings in her vicinity: they are violent, greedy and stupid, she said. But the compassionate Padmasambhava pleaded with her that there are some who are able to follow the path of the Buddha, and that they are in need of havens where that aim can be pursued. He won, of course, and the local practice reflecting inspiration from and protectivity towards the doubly living landscape seems to have held sway until recent times. Furthermore, I feel that what I have learned in the Plough Furrow has given me a somewhat direct look into the environment and values that characterized Bumthang at the time of Pemalingpa. This, and some similarities I see in my own Norwegian background, constitute the main parts of my bridge to Pemalingpa's reality.[26]

In order to illustrate the ecological relevance, I will relate a few elements of the local Tseringma/Guru Rimpoche legend. The various points of the legend and how they should be interpreted have been transmitted over the ages through Termas. The name Plough Furrow refers to the way the sacred valley was created. After her conversion, Tseringma made one of her servant animals, an enormous yak, available to Guru Rimpoche, alongside an equally enormous plough. Thus equipped, the Guru created the valley by ploughing through the rock, thundering along and leaving what even today appears as a perfect plough furrow. Into this well-formed crack Tseringma let flow streams of sacred water, and immediately a band of grass, beautiful flowers and trees sprang up throughout the length of the valley. These streams are real aquae vitae - waters of life, and even today they are the object of annual thanksgiving rites. Damming or diverting them would be considered a sacrilege: they are mother earth's gifts, directed and ordered perfectly to produce abundant life. - I know now that there are similar Tseringma wells and creeks throughout Bhutan, respected in the same way, and questioning has revealed that in such cases, modern dams and diversions are out of the question. - In any case, the Plough Furrow's narrow strip of fertile land, demanding of the inhabitants' sweat and toil and no easy riches, has nevertheless functioned as the base for a highly artistic and socially creative local culture. All this is incomprehensible to Western, mechanistically and commercially reasoning minds.

Every year, each family consecrates the best nak (female yak) to Tseringma, to act as a link between the divine mother and the rest of the herd; this is likewise the practice

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26 The Plough Furrow has many marks witnessesing Guru Rimpoche's and Yeshé Tsogyal's presence 1200 years ago. Prominent is the meditational cave where the Guru converted Tseringma.

in Eastern Bhutan. In the Plough Furrow, it is regarded as a sin to place a house on ground that can be used for agriculture or good grazing, and it is equally a sin to fell a tree if it is not absolutely necessary, for instance if the bridge across the river has been washed away by the monsoon flood. And one should never fell a young tree, because it should be given a chance to lead a full life, developing its potentialities. - Ecologically, this is very sound practice, since removing large, old trees lets more sunlight for the surrounding young ones. But the most important effect of this attitude is that it gives absolute protection against clearfelling, a practice that on the southern slopes of Himalayas easily leads to erosion, floods, and loss of farmland. A further example of the protective attitude that Tseringma promotes, are the strict rules regarding the use of certain edible roots in the forest - roots that should be spared for years of crop failure.

In the Plough Furrow, too, Tseringma is on occasion differentiated into the Five Sisters of Long Life. This is to express different qualities and powers involved in life protection. They are thought of as forming a mandala, and the Tseringma mountain protecting the Plough Furrow has a form that, seen from certain angles, conforms to a mandala: grouped on the top ridge, Tashi Tseringma has two bigger and two smaller sisters. These are all worshiped at a certain festival celebrating the movement of the villagers, in late autumn, down to the winter village.

These five sisters associated with the Tseringma mountain are the same ones as are paid homage to throughout most of Bhutan and are given beautiful expression in painting and sculpture in certain Nyingma temples. In various ways, these are associated with Pemalingpa. One of the two large Nyingma monasteries in Bhutan, Damitse, founded by Chöden Zangmo, a niece of Pemalingpa,[27] has a special temple devoted to Tseringma. Throughout the entire Tibeto-Himalayan area, including Bhutan, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, Tseringma is represented through different emanations or goddesses belonging to her retinue, like Jomo Dangaling (above Yonphula) and Jomo Tsong-Tsongma (near the Arunachal Pradesh border).

But like nature, Tseringma is not dependable as a protectress, regardless of what you do; "she smiles, but she is apt to change within a moment into an angry mood."[28] According to the contract Guru Rimpoche made with her in the Plough Furrow on behalf of human beings, she will be a protectress only as long as her rules of social and ecological non-violence are adhered to. Milarepa, the central saint and well-spring from whom the early Kagyupa teachings flowed, had one of his meditational caves on the northern slopes of the Tseringma mountain, i.e. very close to the Plough Furrow. Tseringma apparently had a very strong character of her own, probably frustrated now and then at the frail nature of the human beings that had settled at her feet. So there was a renewed battle of strong spirits. Tseringma's character, the conflict and Milarepa's final success are all amply expressed in his beautiful poems inspired by the Goddess of Life.[29]

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27 Another theory says that Chöden Zangmo was Pemalingpa's grand-daughter.

28 Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

29 *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, translated and annotated by Garma C. C. Chang, volumes I and II, New Jersey 1962. The complementary, fruit-bringing poles of

A New Adversary

One of the conditions that Tseringma and Guru Rimpoche set up when the Plough Furrow Beyul was established, was that Tseringma's mountain abode is sacred ground and should not be trodden upon by imperfect human beings. After years of discussions with inhabitants of Plough Furrow, I interpret this as having a special and a general meaning: The special one is that no-one shall climb the mountain, as it would be a grave breach of respect for the sacred. The general one applies to more than this mountain: human beings should know their place in nature as well as in the sphere of spiritual quests, and this ties in with the Buddhist concept of reality. - Separate individuality is an illusion, and the individual's strivings, including all sorts of conquests, keep him or her firmly inside the wheel of Samsara. Both the special and the general interpretations apply to the Western mountain climbers who twenty years ago were queuing up to be the first ones to conquer the mountain Tseringma - to them "the last problem of the Himalayas"! - It is the same competitive individualism that is at the roots of the current eco-social crisis.

The inhabitants of Plough Furrow resisted the climbers as well as they could, sending delegations to Kathmandu (involving this author), but to no avail: the government of Nepal was more interested in money to be earned from the expeditions than the religious sentiments of remote Himalayan villagers. A month after an American expedition reached the summit of Tseringma, a gigantic landslide devastated the Plough Furrow's best potato fields and killed one person, and to the villagers the message was clear: the old contract had been broken, and from now on they would be without Tseringma's protection. - And what about the sacredness of the valley - its status as a Beyul?

Again I am reminded of what I later learned about Bhutan and her spiritual/ecological tradition: one of the officers involved in the climbing of Jomolhari, a Bhutanese mother earth mountain, could not bear with himself to continue the last lap to the summit, within easy reach. It would be a too violent breach with his Vajrayana upbringing - a trespassing of the boundaries of man's 'eco-spiritual' place in nature.[30]

I am glad to learn that, since the climbing of Jomolhari, restrictions have been imposed on the climbing of Bhutan's sacred mountains. Nepal's sacred peaks have all been climbed now, and remaining pockets of "Tseringma world views" as represented by the Plough Furrow community, are taking their places on the list of extinct species among the creations of the world's Life Mothers. In the Plough Furrow, the desecration of Tseringma broke one of the remaining barriers against the sacrilegious and anti-ecological onslaughts of the present wave of samsaric individual competitiveness, contributing to a new order of things.

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compassionate, skilful means (Milarepa) and wisdom (Tseringma) are here probably given expression in a deeper, moreimaginative and aesthetically elevated manner then anywhere else. The ecophilosophical implications are easily discernible, clear and emphatic.

30 The story is related in B. C. Olschak: *Bhutan – Land of Hidden Tressures*, Oxford/New Delhi 1971.

My years in the Plough Furrow acted, in a way, as a preparation for the later, insight-giving wanderings with Pema Tshewang and Khenpo Phuntsok Tashi through the meaning-filled landscape of Pemalingpa's Bumthang. A landscape which is a place for inventive worship and inventive struggle for material survival, and for every-day artistic creativity. One of many examples of Pemalingpa's 'practical spirituality' is that of the iron pans that Pemalingpa buried: they are objects that are materially useful and at the same time sacred. Another example is that of the mill-stones Pemalingpa shaped, and which are still in use with the blessings he gave to the users. A third example is the swords he forged. But above all, the striking features of this living landscape are the places and the marks, each associated with colourful and unique events, where Pemalingpa extracted physical and spiritual Termas. They are central to 'eco-tantrism' because they remind also the wandering visitors of how man's work and nature's work can merge through the link of spiritual materiality.

Bhutan's Pemalingpa and Norway's Ash Lad: the World of Mindful Improvisation

Let me expand now on a specific part of the range of affinities between traditional Norway and Pemalingpa's Bumthang. In both cases, the challenges of mountains, shifting climates and a scarcity of resources had to foster inventiveness. People in their scattered localities had to develop complex modes of self-reliance. They were constantly faced with a nature of change and novelty, with sequences of events defying any detailed planning. So their only alternative was to refine their ability to improvise, i.e. to act in concert with the great and always improvising orchestra of nature.

I want to make the point here that improvisational ability may be seen as a practical consequence of Buddhism, which reveals to us how the world is a process, containing nothing static: the world is inherently non-plannable and the more you act on the opposite assumption, the more you will suffer.[31]

But even without Buddhism, the Norwegian mountain farmers and cattle herders had to relate to and learn from their reality, manifested very emphatically as a complex process. This is why we find that the central figure of Norwegian sagas and children's stories is a person behaving much like prominent Tantric personalities, masters of liberating, rule-breaking creativity, people like Guru Rimpoche, Tilopa, Naropa, Milarepa, Drukpa Kunlek, and Pemalingpa.

The Norwegian secular version of a tantric master was called Askeladden - "The Ash Lad", a name given because he enjoyed stirring the ashes in the fire place to watch how the flames of the fire would shift and change. Flames are an old Buddhist symbol for the world process that never repeats itself and that destroys all attempts at protecting individual separateness. The flames are also a reminder that everything is interconnected and causal.

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31 As emphasised by Lama Gunsang. See n. 13.

To make a long story short, Askeladden behaves in the same style as masters like Milarepa in the story told by Pema Tshewang. In one case Askeladden even picks up a horn "that might be useful" (and he makes surprising use of it later), while his companions, who think the world is a fixed and plannable place, make fun of his naive and outlandish solutions. "When something happens, whatever we happen to find will do", sings Milarepa. Both in the Tantric and in the Norwegian traditions, this not only denotes a practical approach to the problem of everyday existence, but equally points to a path past anxiety, to liberation[32]. Within many folk cultures of the world, a "Milarepa/Pemalingpa approach" has found experiential support and has left decisive marks on various traditions. It is right there to be seen, it is part of our roots, but is easily overlooked by academically trained specialists of the industrial age.

The concrete world-grasp of the Bodhisattva

Pema Tshewang mentions Dorje Drakpa and Thangtong Gyalpo who became great craftsmen, like Pemalingpa, and he says that when Pemalingpa became a craftsman, that "is in keeping with a tradition amongst bodhisattvas". He quotes Santideva, who says that "saints are those who must show the Path to others, and they cannot do so unless they know the world and the toils of ordinary people". And he adds a quotation from the Buddha Maitreya, who says that "if he does not make a thorough study of the Five Major Sciences, even a great bodhisattva cannot attain Enlightenment. One must know these things, normal processes and activities, in order to know what exists and to eradicate one's misconception of others". This is clear talking and a clear alternative to our contemporary world's "revolving on a crooked axle", *dukkha*[33] . It is the alternative of taking the human being's concrete life-world as the basis for understanding, instead of the abstractions of static models - of correcting "crooked axles" to ensure easy rolling in rugged terrain.

The human being's expansion into mastery: from the outer to the inner landscape, from individual feats to ego-liberating collectivity

Let me enter another West-East bridge: To a people who are often dependent in their daily life on getting from one spot to another on difficult rock, feats of climbing mark high social status. My conviction is that, even though 'miraculous' elements come into play beyond a certain point, Pemalingpa must have been an extraordinarily agile and physically fit climber, as well as a courageous one. And his activity in this area offers an additional illustration of how the zone between bodily and mental feats is as blurred as the borderline between material and spiritual landscapes, spoken of earlier. In the same

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32 I cannot elaborate on it here, but in my opinion the same kind of approach to human existence is echoed in the catch-phrase of the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: "Existence precedes essence." We are not fulfilling some preconstructed pattern but we create it; this is our freedom that gives us total responsibility.

33 "Dukkha literally refers to an ill-made axle, implying a wheel that is awry" (N. W. Ross: *Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen,* London 1973). If the cart is kept running, with no correction to the axle, inevitabley a complete dislocation will result.

way, too, the border-zone between the normal and the extra-normal is a seamless progression.[34]

To begin with, Pemalingpa must have been what we today think of as a great Himalayan expeditioner, traversing passes and going on for weeks, with no 'support systems', not to speak of any morale-lifting 'media coverage'. In all, he made 24 expeditions across the Himalayan ranges, most often at elevations of 5-6000 meters. We know today how much it takes - from the viewpoint of Western city dwellers, representatives of planned worlds; in the Pemalingpa saga the hardships and the physical and psychical feats involved are not even regarded as worthy of mention. And not only did Pemalingpa keep on crossing the Himalayas - his movements across strenuous terrain within Bhutan were countless. Measured by Western standards, he was extremely fit and vigourous, but probably not much more then his local contemporaries! This is an aspect of that society which should make us stop and think, and recognize a deep difference between them and us regarding what is reasonable or non-reasonable in human affairs. Pemalingpa's extra-normal qualities and landscape mastery are, however, not so much revealed through high altitude trekking as through rock-climbing, which was required of him in several cases to extract termas.

At Ged Do near Lhalung he is more or less an ordinary, expert climber, removing his robes and putting on climbing breeches ("Tibetan trousers") before rappelling. The whole thing goes a step further at the Vajra Rock east of Tharpaling, which is "as smooth as a mirror." He scales it in a trance state, but when the trance leaves him, he has difficulty getting down. Upon reading this, I cannot help being reminded of events from my own climbing experience: the difference between climbing in a mood of elation and self-confidence, and then suddenly losing nerve. This elation may, according to many observers, on occasion be close to something like a "trance state", where feats beyond the normal are accomplished.[35]

Moving a step further into climbing feats of a more miraculous kind, we find Pemalingpa scaling the Drak Rimochen cliff. How he climbed it is not told, except that he did it "in a trance". He got down by "flying to the top of a nearby tree, and from there he alighted at the door of his tent." My speculation about this is that the tree was near to the cliff, and that he was still doing a masterful act of rock climbing, enhanced through the perfectly detailed concentration made possible by the trance state. Pemalingpa's own

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34 Helena Norberg-Hodge describes how the Ladakhis do not think in terms of "a fundamental opposition, for instance, between mind and body or reason and intuition. Ladakhis experience the world through what they call *semba,* best translated as a cross between "heart" and "mind". "She also mentions that the Ladakhi verb *to be* has more than twenty variations, in order to deal with an ever-shifting, complex world. *(Ancient Futures – learning from Ladakh,* San Franscisco 1991). Edmund Husserl touches on the same when he says that it is an essential feature of natural languages to be inexact; precisely defined scientific concepts presuppose a static world of unbridgeable dichotomies.

35 The point is corroborated by leading climbers, like Douglas Tompkins, interviewed while writing this essay.

recounting of such feats is of course given out of the trance state, and the tales of the observers are always to some degree changed in the course of time - particularly when dealing with the border-zone of the sacred. However that may be, I shall make a somewhat speculative attempt at identification. It has three sources:

1) Research done on the accomplishments under hypnotic states.
2) Various descriptions of lung-gompas, "trance walkers", in Tibet.
3) My own experience with ascents in steep terrain during states of meditational concentration in the Plough Furrow.

The lung-gompas were extremely fast-moving messengers between monasteries in old Tibet, appearing to observers to be moving in long jumps, barely touching the ground, almost like flying, and doing it in a state of trance. My own experience is that through a sort of meditational state you may scale a mountainside with uncanny speed and very little exertion, even with a heavy load, feeling as if flying. The experience is very clearly one of being in a world different from the normal one. Other climbers have told me of similar "unexplainable" experiences.[36]

My point is that, faced with phenomena of this kind, we do not have to limit or stop our enquiries at content-empty catchwords like "miraculous". Not only that, but from a Buddhist point of view, a dichotomy normal/miraculous would mean an acceptance of the Western, scientistic dichotomy rational/irrational hitched to the totally un-Buddhistic distinction bodily/spiritual. Instead, I am saying that the human body/mind entity has powers beyond the physically measurable, qualities which Buddhist world awareness takes for granted and which Buddhist meditational training may bring forth.

In any case, this dichotomy between miraculous and normal places acts like terma-extractions in a realm of the impossible relative to what ordinary people can achieve. But the Tertön is not removed from his community in this way. He is just revealing an ultimately developed mind-body mastery that is accessible to all. And we know from the records that in Pemalingpa's environment there were, and are today, many others in various stages of development towards his level.

Here we must also be very careful not to mix the Christian idea of miracles into the Buddhist frame. A Tertön is not helped by some God breaking natural law. Neither is he himself such a god, forcing inert rock to move. He is, in contradistinction, a particularly finely trained and attuned partaker in the continually self-creating process of the doubly living landscape. And what he does reverberates down through the centuries, being continually interpreted and recreated by adepts and teachers who are themselves creative participants in the same process. Thus, he is not just an 'individual' in history, but a link in a continually unfolding web, and that web is the very culture itself.

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36 One climber with the same kind of experience, also from the Plough Furrow, is Nils Faarulund, head of the Norwegian Mountain Academy.

My strongest impression of Pemalingpa's continuing inspiration comes from culture bearers like Pema Tshewang. Sitting on the cliff at Mebartsho with the water torrent below, the very human, non-saintly nature of the extraordinary person Pemalingpa struck me through the vivid description given by Pema Tshewang. It was as if it all happened last year. The young boy Pemalingpa finds himself suddenly the central actor in a momentous drama. Pemalingpa is not here the master of the situation. Far from appearing as the architect of some stageplay, he is bewildered at his central placement in a complex process beyond his present individual life-span, as it has unfolded so far.

Through trances and dreams he has been led to act and talk in a way that has aroused both the highest expectations and the deepest suspicions in his community - the latter enhanced by the fact that this young man is unlearned and has a low-class, commoner's background - even as a blacksmith. In my own identification with the situation, admittedly speculatively made to fit into my socio-ecological perspective, the expectations of the majority of the crowd originate in their own social position: they are unlearned commoners like Peling. His challenge is their challenge. - A miraculous vindication of their equal worth may be at stake! At the same time, some of those present harbour a feeling of envy: Why should this one, no better than them, one even lower, have all this attention, have a right to put himself forward like this? Altogether, it is easy to imagine the knotted tenseness among the people gathered around Pemalingpa at this performance test that was to decide the course of his life. From the discovery of his own peculiar talents, appearing to signal a position beyond his wildest dreams, and his clumsy and hasty reaction to it, he finds himself caught in a Faustian, self-propelling spiral of events. Now there is only one way to go, and that way has very probably death as the outcome. From desperation, the boy moves to determination - and then into a trance-like state, the state where the mind/body unity may perform the unbelievable, a shift from the mundane to the god-like.

Of course, when back in the normal state, one cannot explain this in everyday, rational terms. - Neither could this author after once falling and rocketing down a Plough Furrow icefall, performing impossible things to finally halt himself at the edge of a crevasse, his next-second grave as scientific models would have concluded. But "Tseringma (just around the corner) protected you", my Sherpa friends assured me afterwards: "She arrives at a moment's notice, if you really need her!" I had suddenly, for a few seconds, been a part-weaver of the Tantric carpet, an improviser in the Peling vein; had stared death in the eye and made the transition. Disregarding personal experiences like this would mean negating our own direct, non-abstract hand-hold on our human life-world.

In any case, this is how I can identify with Pemalingpa at that crucial moment in 1475 ad. The bud burst into unexpected bloom and he entered a path so beyond the normal that this unlearned fellow was later to engage in discussions on the very abstract tenets of Dzogchen philosophy. This achievement is, in my opinion, as 'miraculous' as any of his treasure extractions. Pemalingpa could enter that path and walk it with gradually growing security and authority as a partaker but also a master improviser in a Tantric social fabric needing improvisers as the weft to enliven and strengthen the warp.

And the cloth that Pemalingpa helped to weave had an extra strength from its doubly living structure.

The earth-crust of meaning and value has grown thin in the European landscape, but the eco-social crisis is a forceful teacher. My guess is that the cycle will swing, and that the future will give us Pemalingpas sensitive to the guiding voices of the earth's various Tseringmas and Yeshé Tsogyals. The interactions will, of course, happen through new languages and concepts, but in this present period of dramatic transition the world will be well served through the preservation of the few remaining strips of double cloth, like Bhutan, "The one in the South, bearing medicine".

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with Choké spellings

Standard Buddhist terms and diacritical marks are omitted; where well-known Sanskrit names are used in the text, Choké equivalent is given with Choké spelling in the right hand column. A few of the most common Sanskrit equivalents for Choké names are also supplied in brackets.

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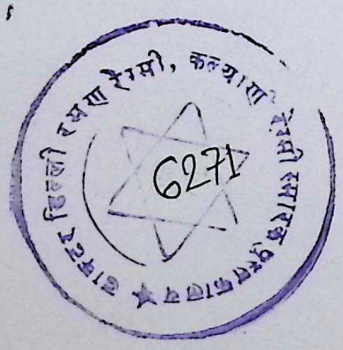

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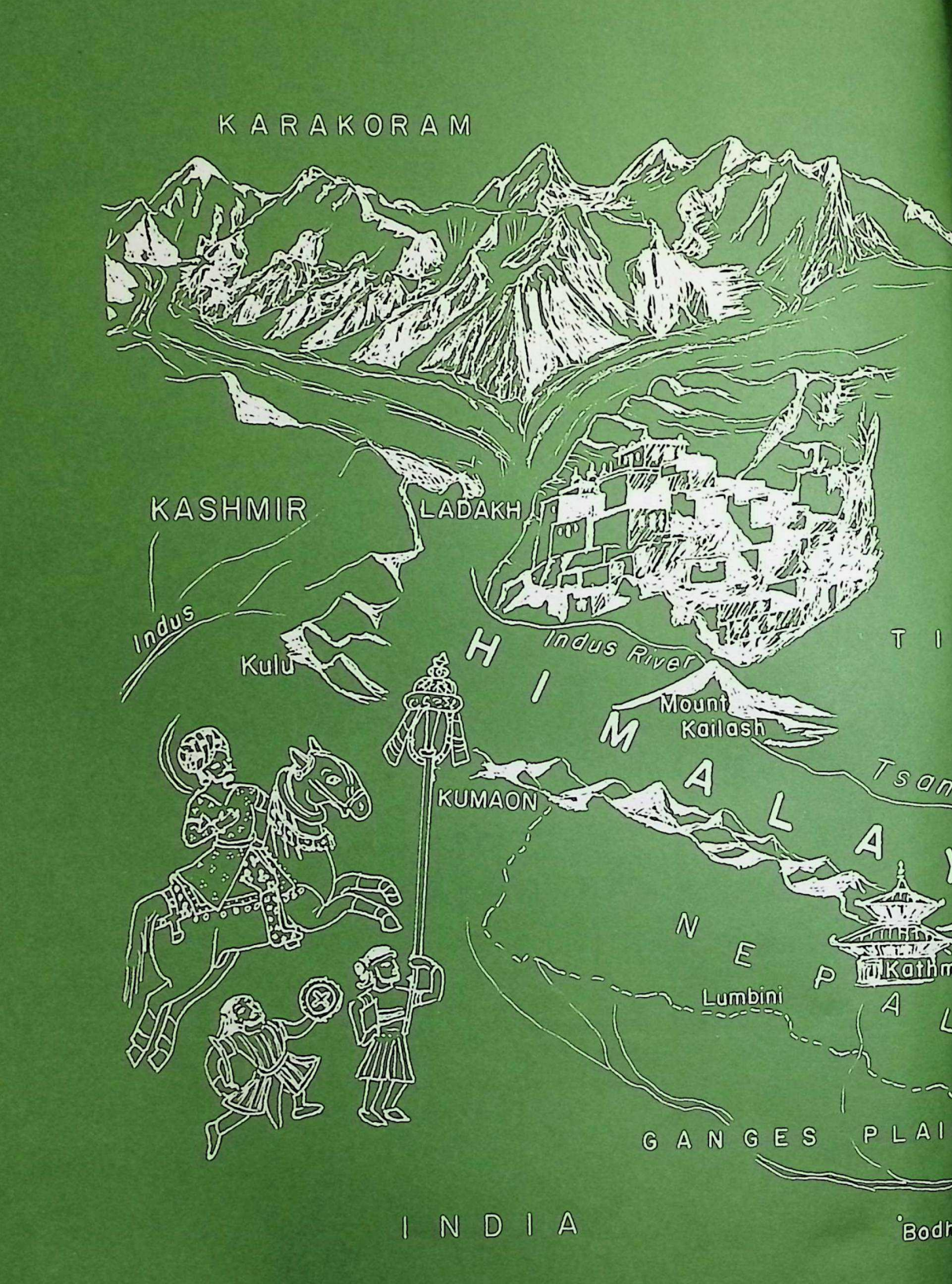
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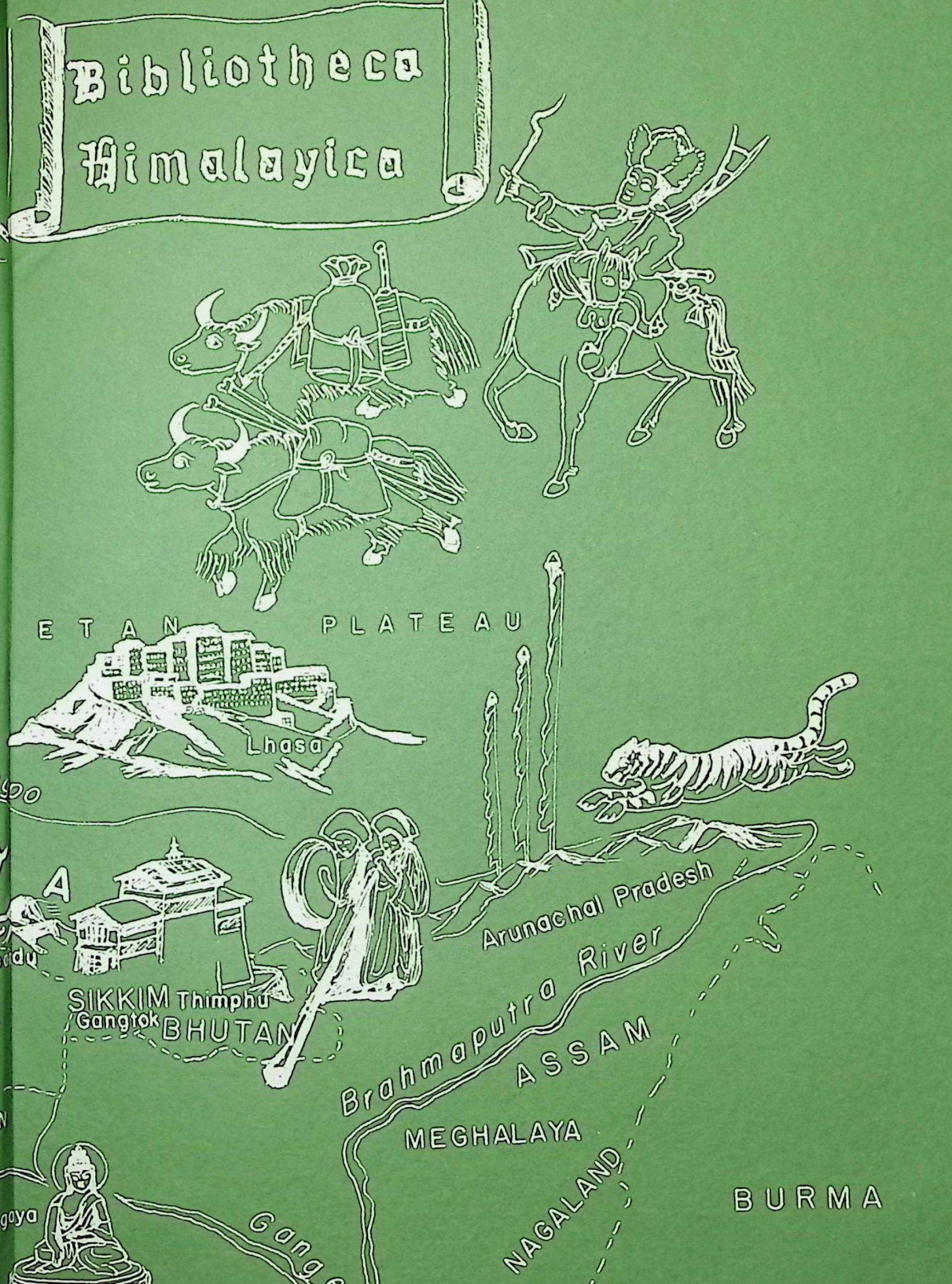
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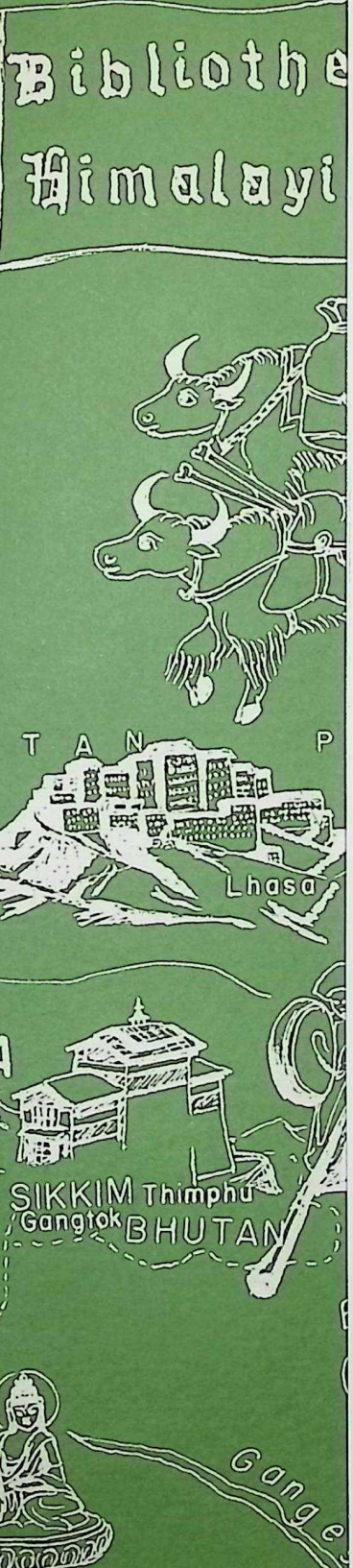

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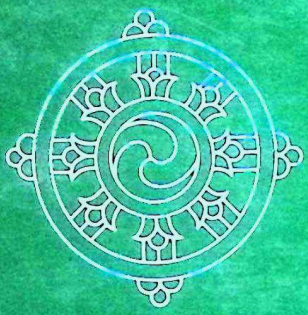

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